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SKETCHES

OF A

HISTORY OF LITERATURE:

CONTAINING

LIVES AND CHARACTERS

OF THE MOST EMINENT WRITERS

IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, ANCIENT AND MODERN,

AND

CRITICAL REMARKS ON THEIR WORKS.

TOGETHER WITH

SEVERAL LITERARY ESSAYS.

THE WHOLE DESIGNED AS A DIRECTORY,

TO GUIDE THE JUDGMENT

AND FORM THE TASTE IN READING THE BEST AUTHORS.

BY THE LATE ROBERT ALVES, A. M.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

THE following Sketches are intended to exhibit a critical review of Literature from the earlieſt times; a ſubject pregnant both with inſtruction and entertainment. The Author flatters himſelf, that, as far as they go, they will afford a diſtinct view of ancient and modern learning, with a juſt eſtimation of moſt writers, whether in philoſophy, poetry, hiſtory, or oratory.

In order to render this Work as uſeful as poſſible, he has interſperſed remarks upon compoſition in general; and in theſe it is his conſtant endeavour to eſtabliſh polite learning on the principles of common ſenſe, genuine purity, and eloquence. He has pointed out both faults and beauties; and in eſtimating national genius, as well as that of particular authors, he has been careful to mark, though with candour, thoſe more peculiar blemiſhes that affect compoſition; and, where theſe have been more glaring, he has been more ſevere, and expoſed them with the greater freedom.

By the ſtrictures which he has thus thrown out on ancient and modern genius, he wiſhes to rouſe the attention of the age to lively and elegant pleaſures. He unfolds the ſources of learning that we may drink from their fountain, and derive from thence both improvement and amuſement.

He recommends to the young writer a chaſte elegance of language, by ſetting before him the beſt models. He recommends to readers of every rank, the moſt rational enter-

tainment, by giving them a diſplay of the moſt ſublime, moral, and entertaining authors *.

In drawing literary characters, he has given examples of ſome of the beſt paſſages from their works, illuſtrated with critical remarks. Theſe examples he might have enlarged with advantage; but the conciſeneſs of his plan obliged him to ſhorten them.

He has alſo drawn frequent compariſons between ſeveral firſt-rate authors, both ancient and modern; and, in order to enliven the more didactic part of the Work, he has briefly delineated their characters.

The Author pretends not to ſay that the ſubject of the Eſſays is entirely new: claſſical criticiſm is as ancient as the days of Ariſtotle. Obſervations on authors, language, and compoſition have been made, and, probably, will be made, by many ingenious and learned writers. But any one, or more of them, however eminent, cannot preclude others from walking in the ſame field. If one has not the ſtrength and valour of Achilles, he may have the wary and circumſpect eye of Ulyſſes; if he is not deep and profound, he may be intelligent, perſpicuous, and entertaining.

Upon the whole, the Author flatters himſelf that theſe Sketches may be found to contain more various and more curious matter than any other volume of the ſame ſize, and the ſame ſubject in the Engliſh language. The plan is entirely new, and exhibits, in one connected ſeries, an uncommon variety of literary information. There is hardly an author of eminence, in any language, ancient or modern, but is noticed and characteriſed in the preſent Work: conſequently, in order to guide the judgment and form the taſte in reading, the Author preſumes to recommend it as an inſtructive and (he hopes) an agreeable companion to the young ſcholar, or even the more advanced and enlightened ſtudent. The orator, the poet, the hiſtorian, the phi-

* He has attended alſo to the uſual reading of ladies, ſuch as moral tales, fables, novels, hiſtory, and plays, and given them ample directions.

loſopher, may all find, in theſe pages, ſomething either to inſtruct or to amuſe them.

For the convenience of the reader there is ſubjoined an alphabetical liſt of about four hundred authors, in different languages, deſcribed or mentioned in the Work.

A

SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

AUTHOR.

THERE is nothing more natural than the curioſity which prompts us to enquire into the life of an author whoſe works have afforded us either entertainment or inſtruction. And though the life of Mr. Alves was not diſtinguiſhed by any ſplendid atchievement, yet a few ſimple memoirs of it*, ſuperadded to the very brief account which he gives of himſelf and his writings in page 177, will not, it is hoped, be unacceptable to the reader.

ROBERT ALVES was born at Elgin on the 11th of December 1745 His father, who had a numerous young family, with a mediocrity of fortune, encouraged by the promiſing genius of his ſon, put him to the grammar ſchool of that burgh, where he made ſuch a happy proficiency in claſſical literature, that, upon repairing to Aberdeen, he gained the higheſt burſary, or premium, at the annual competition for burſaries in the Mariſchal College and Univerſity of that city. Here he continued the uſual period of four years, and in the year 1766, as he tells us himſelf, took his degrees in philoſophy.

* Theſe memoirs were communicated to the Editor, moſtly, by Mr. Robert Dunbar, of the Window Tax Office, whoſe friendſhip to the Author gave him acceſs to know the chief events of his life.

During the ſecond year of his attendance at the Univerſity his Elegy on Time made its firſt appearance; which, as it procured him the friendſhip of Dr. Beattie, and other gentlemen of literature ſeems to have elevated him not a little, and to have fixed him in the train of the muſes. This Elegy afterwards, conſiderably enlarged and improved, was printed in a collection of poems which he publiſhed at Edinburgh in 1782.

After leaving the College he was ſucceſſively ſchoolmaſter at Deſkford, in Banffſhire and private tutor to the children of Mr. Moriſon of Bognie, in Aberdeenſhire; both which characters he ſuſtained with reputation.

During the period above mentioned, he attended the Divinity Hall at Aberdeen, and ſeemed at that time, to have had an eye to the miniſtry. But he ſoon changed his intention; for a church falling vacant, which was in the gift of Mr. Moriſon, Mr. Alves had the firſt offer, and rejected it; conſcious, perhaps of his want of that popular ſpecies of eloquence which attracts the attention of a country congregation.

Not long afterwards the grammar ſchool of Banff becoming vacant, he applied for it, and ſucceeded. Here indeed was a ſingular inſtance of diſintereſtedneſs; for the emoluments of the ſchool, at that time, did not exceed fifty pounds; and thoſe of the clerical charge were, at leaſt, thrice as much.

Our Author came to Banff in the year 1773, and taught the grammar ſchool with conſiderable reputation, till he happened to fall in love with a young lady of ſome beauty and fortune, to whom he paid his addreſſes, and to whom, under the name of Delia, he addreſſed ſome love elegies, which were publiſhed in the above-mentioned collection. Elated with the proſpect of ſucceſs, which he unfortunately indulged for ſome years, he was ſo much affected with his diſappointment at laſt, that, finding no more pleaſure in thoſe places where he had been amuſing himſelf ſo long

with the airy dreams of approaching felicity, he reſigned his charge to the magiſtrates, and left that town.

He, whoſe dependence lies in the reſources of his genius and learning, naturally repairs to the metropolis, where their product is generally diſpoſed of to the moſt advantage. Mr. Alves, therefore, upon leaving the ſchool of Banff in the year 1779, came directly to Edinburgh; where he commenced private teacher of Greek, Latin, French, and Italian, in all which he was eminently ſkilled; and afterwards added to theſe the Spaniſh and Portugueze, in which he had made no ſmall proficiency.

From this time he continued to reſide in Edinburgh, teaching the above languages, and, occaſionally, tranſlating and compiling for bookſellers, particularly ſome articles in the Edinburgh Encyclopædia, the Magazines, and the new edition of Salmon's Geographical Grammar; except that he retired to the country for about nine months, and taught a gentleman's children in Clackmananſhire.

The work which is now offered to the public, having been begun in the year 1784, conſiſted, at firſt, of detached pieces, which were, by degrees, combined into the preſent form by the advice of the late Lord Gardenſtoun, who did Mr. Alves the honour to reviſe them, and to add ſeveral pertinent remarks, which are incorporated into the body of the Work, and marked with the letter G.

Both the Hiſtory of Literature, and the Eſſays having been completed and corrected by the Author, the Hiſtory was put to the preſs in the month of October laſt, and the whole of it was already printed, together with the firſt Eſſay, under the Author's inſpection, when death put a ſudden period to his life on the firſt day of January 1794.

With reſpect to his poetical productions, we refer the reader to the Author's own account, and to the approbation of the poem called the Weeping Bard, given by the authors of the Engliſh Review, and in pages, 177, 178, and 179 following. With regard to the preſent Work, upon which he beſtowed

much labour, and piqued himſelf moſt, it is our opinion that it will be found to be what it profeſſes to be an uſeful Directory for guiding the judgment and forming the taſte in reading the beſt authors.

Mr. Alves was, in ſtature rather above the middle ſize; his complexion was dark, his viſage long, his features were ſomewhat coarſe but not diſagreeable; and his countenance was ſerious, expreſſive, and manly.

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SKETCHES
OF
A HISTORY OF LITERATURE.

PART I.
Of Oriental Literature.

SECTION I.
Of the Firſt Language.

LANGUAGE, as involving ſo many combinations, is the moſt difficult of all inventions; being the inſtrument of human converſation, it is the moſt uſeful.

Letters, or written language, is the next in dignity and uſe; being the grand key to knowledge, arts, and ſciences.

Whether theſe two are of human, or, as ſome have ſuppoſed, of divine origin, cannot be eaſily aſcertained. The complexity of their conſtruction and inflexion, the variety of compound, as well as ſimple ideas which they expreſs; the wonderful reach diſplayed in the invention of letters, about two dozen of which, by different arrangements, expreſs the whole of human thought, which is boundleſs and infinite; all tend to ſhow both the one and the other to have been the reſult of much forethought and the moſt profound reflection.

If of human invention, it muſt have required time, experience, and long inveſtigation, to have diſcovered and improved them. The firſt nations, it is ſuppoſed, were mute, or expreſſed themſelves in dumb ſhow. Natural ſigns, looks, and geſticulations, muſt have ſupplied the place of words and artificial expreſſion; till, by degrees, finding the tedioufneſs and imperfection of this mode of intercourſe, men would of neceſſity and by compact, have recourſe firſt to oral or ſpoken language; then to figures and hieroglyphics; and laſtly, to letters or written language.

Theſe, indeed, muſt have been previous to all other inventions or improvements whatever; as, without them, no human communication can properly take place, no inſtruction or information of any kind. They muſt, therefore, have paved the way not only to the uſeful and convenient arts; but to human intercourſe in general, polity, commerce, and ſciences of every ſort.

Upon examining the ſtructure of languages, we diſcover a very great analogy betwixt all thoſe of remote origin.

Nature operates here moſtly the ſame way in all the human race. The words of any original language muſt be few, as mens ideas in an early ſtate are but few. And theſe words and expreſſions are very much of the metaphorical kind for the ſame reaſon; to wit, the ſcantineſs of language.

As in this ſtate mens imaginations are peculiarly active, they will naturally, in their expreſſions, have recourſe to thoſe external objects, that are daily before their eyes and ſtrike them moſt forcibly. In warm countries there will be frequent alluſions to heat; in cold, to froſt, ſnow, and hail; in mild, to green fields, ſoft breezes, and purling ſtreams.

If greatneſs of ſize is ſpoken of, the African will allude to the elephant, and the Greenlander to the whale; if beauty is the ſubject, the former will allude to the ſun, the latter, moſt probably, to the ſplendor of ice or of ſnow.

The Hebrew and Celtic languages are, certainly, both of very remote origin. Accordingly their idiom, being

unpoliſhed and ſcanty, is highly figurative and metaphorical; and poſſeſſes that ardor and conciſeneſs ſo peculiar to moſt primitive tongues. The Celtic, ſuppoſed older than the Greek, was the ancient language of Gaul, Spain, and the Britiſh iſlands. The Hebrew, or its dialects, prevail to this day over Arabia, Perſia, a great part of India, and the northern parts of Africa.

The High Dutch and Sclavonian are likewiſe of great antiquity; though it is extremely difficult to aſcertain their origin. Perhaps they may be deemed a-kin to the Celtic; as the Latin to the Greek, with a mixture of Tuſcan. Their genius, however, is harſh and rude, though poſſeſſed of ſtrength; their manner cold and tedious.

The Latin and Greek I reckon of nearly the ſame antiquity, the latter perhaps ſomewhat older. They are likewiſe related in form and idiom, and bear a ſtrong reſemblance to the country in which they were produced. Beſides their own intrinſic and ſuperlative value, they become of peculiar conſequence, as they enter more or leſs into the compoſition of moſt European tongues.

I ſhall only juſt further obſerve, that, as all original languages ſeem one way or other interwoven or connected together, it is moſt probable that they have ſprung from one ſtill more original, the fountain-head of the reſt. Perhaps the Hebrew, Chaldaic, or Arabic, bid the faireſt for this honour; yet there is no certainty that theſe were either ſpoken at the building of Babel, or were only corruptions of a more general one that took place before the confuſion of tongues, and the conſequent diſperſion of mankind.

SECTION II.

Of the Firſt Poetry.

WHAT is ſaid above is chiefly referable to literature or works of compoſition; and poetry, for various reaſons, muſt be the firſt exerciſe in this way.

The praiſe of heroes and of gods, love-ſongs, paſtoral and elegiac poems; in fine all thoſe in which the heart and paſſions are more immediately and naturally concerned, would employ the attention of the earlieſt bards; and the different kinds would be cultivated more or leſs, according to the ſtate of ſociety in which men are placed, or the paſſions with which they are actuated.

The Arabians, Jews, Perſians, and other Aſiatic nations, have all diſcovered a propenſity to poetry in an early period. And even the wild Americans, at this very day, have their war-ſongs and amorous ditties; which are chanted and ſung with a force and ſpirit peculiar to themſelves.

But the antient Gothic and Celtic nations, placed in a colder climate, with nerves better braced, and ſpirits more invigorated, have diſcovered, perhaps, a nobler vein, and breathed a higher enthuſiaſm.

From the romantic nature of their mythology, and their enthuſiaſtic regard to women, on whom, as believing them poſſeſſed of a prophetic ſpirit, they beſtowed the higheſt honours, and worſhipped them with the moſt diſtant reſpect; from their belief in legendary tales, enchantment, and demoniſm; partly, too, from their own bold and intrepid ſpirit, as well as that of the feudal government which inſpired them with great ideas of heroiſm and liberty, the Gothic and Celtic genius was particularly turned for muſic, poetry, and the wildeſt raptures of enthuſiaſm.

The works of Oſſian, who flouriſhed in the reign of the emperor Caracalla, are diſtinguiſhed for boldneſs and ſublimity. Born with a lofty genius and romantic ſoul, he had the advantage of being an eye-witneſs and an actor, in many of the heroic ſcenes he deſcribes.

That ſuch a man ſhould ariſe in a dark and illiterate age, is only to be accounted for from the ſtrength of nature, and the predominance of genius, men in his country being then in the next ſtate to the ſavage; no laws, no civil polity, no arts, no written language. The only chance the poet had

of having his works tranſmitted to poſterity, was oral tradition, and this was ſubject to a thouſand accidents.

Such was the footing on which ſtood the bards, ſcalds, druids, runers, and minſtrels of the northern nations; yet theſe were then held in the higheſt eſtimation, were conſulted as oracles upon all great occaſions, and to them all the little learning then known was confined.

The poetic genius of the antient Britons exerted itſelf in their bards with a wonderful effect; ſince, in their long ſtruggle with the Romans, and afterwards with the Saxons, the druids and bards ſpurred on the nation with ſuch animating ſtrains to fight for their liberties and country, that their conquerors found it neceſſary to ſuppreſs or put them to death, in order to facilitate their conqueſts.

In the ſixth century, Talieſſin the king of bards, Aneurin, Llywarch-Hen, Cian, Talihearn, and all the moſt famous Welch poets, flouriſhed.

Moſt of the works, however, of theſe poets are loſt, and of thoſe that remain, their antiquity and obſcurity are ſo great, that they are become almoſt unintelligible.

Even the Norwegians, who were a branch of the ancient Scandinavians, and deſcendants of the Goths, were particularly tinctured with this poetic ſpirit, and have left remains that would do honour to any age, for a true and genuine enthuſiaſm.

Wherever, therefore, an ear for muſic has prevailed, or ſparks of genius blazed, in the rudeſt ages, and in all nations, poetry has diſcovered itſelf, independent of climate, of the ſhocks of time, or the revolutions of ſociety.

It has, however, its natural and prediſpoſing cauſes; ſuch as ſtrong paſſions, ſolemnity of character, heroiſm, romance, chivalry; a country beautiful and paſtoral, or wild and mountainous; luxury, indolence, war or love.

A paſtoral life, as affording leiſure and tranquillity, naturally diſpoſes to love and a ſoft kind of poetry; hence its ſtrains are generally either amorous and tender; or gay, ſprightly, and chearful.

On the other hand, a life of war, as pregnant with danger, bold enterprizes, and military enthuſiaſm, produces a poetry wild, bold, and elevated; ſometimes deeply melancholy, but generally full of fire and ſublimity.

Compare, in this view, the poetry and muſic of the north and ſouth of Scotland, and you will ſee whence the difference ariſes. The latter, like Arcadia of old, affords the ſweeteſt paſtoral ſtrains in the world; the former breathes of nothing but wild grandeur and melancholy.

I conclude with obſerving, that as poetry, for reaſons already given, is naturally the firſt exertion of eloquence or compoſition, in a rude and unenlightened age, ſo it will paſs three different ſtages in its progreſs to refinement.

In the moſt ſavage ſtate of ſociety it will be rude, bold, metaphorical; but full of paſſion and nature.

In the ſecond ſtage, it will be more comprehenſive in its objects, as well as phraſeology; more correct, but leſs ardent; more ſimple than ſublime.

In the third ſtage, imagination, paſſion, and philoſophy, will all unite to carry it to the higheſt perfection.

SECTION III.

Of the Oriental Learning and Philoſophy.

MAN, in his rude and uncivilized ſtate, has no great exerciſe of reaſon. To the numerous objects that preſs around him, his internal ſenſes ſeem not equally awake with the external. No examination into cauſes from effects even the moſt ſurpriſing; he feels, but reflects not. His paſſions, on ſome occaſions, may be ſtrongly alarmed and put in agitation; but theſe ſuggeſt nothing to the reaſoning powers, which ſeem to lie dormant in this dominion of nature and inſtinct; or, if they awake and try to form concluſions, they ſtart, as from a hideous dream, with all the motley images that a diſtempered imagination can muſter up.

In this ſtate, mankind can have no notion of a deity, except it be from tradition; and this, as it exiſted in the firſt nations, if we except the Jews, was ſtrangely abſurd and wide off the truth; till we find afterwards, as men advanced in ſociety and knowledge, a faint light dawn, that led them to juſter ideas.

And this was chiefly effected by the philoſophers, endued by Providence in different parts of the world; no doubt to uſher in and further its own mighty and inſcrutable deſigns.

A Perſian Zoroaſter, a Chineſe Confucius, a Grecian Socrates; even the Celtic Druids and Indian Bramins, in different ages, and in different countries, have all been inſtrumental in this way, in many reſpects, perhaps, which we cannot ſee.

All theſe men at the ſame time, that they were excellent moraliſts, were alſo deep inſpectors into nature; and, from an attentive ſurvey of her wonderful operations, were naturally led to the conſideration of a firſt cauſe.

In reality, this ſtudy of nature was prior to the other, and it was not till men had made pretty good advances in it, that they were led to the ſtudy of its author.

It likewiſe deſerves to be remarked, that among the Gentile nations, not only theology and philoſophy originated in an advanced ſtate of ſociety, when men had leiſure and curioſity to puſh the ſpeculative ſciences as far as they could go; but that in general the way to theſe laſt was paved by the preceſſion of the neceſſary arts.

The Egyptians knew nothing of aſtronomy or the celeſtial phænomena, till they were obliged, by reaſon of the annual inundations of the Nile, to learn menſuration, in order to aſcertain their property. Upon this early and neceſſary initiation they took their ground, and mounted, by gradual ſteps in the geometrical ſcale, from the menſuration of lands to that of pyramids; till, having got thus far on their way, they looked ſtill higher, and by an eaſy tranſition applied thoſe calculations to the motions of the heavenly bodies, which they had formerly applied with ſucceſs to the pyramids and the Nile.

From ſome ſuch accidental cauſe, the ſciences ſeem to have taken riſe very early in the eaſt, and probably at a date prior to their riſe in Egypt; though I doubt much, if in thoſe regions they were ever proſecuted to ſuch advantage.

Aſtronomy, more particularly, ſeems to owe its invention to the Orientals. We find Zoroaſter the Perſian excelling in magic, and converſing with the ſtars, at a very early period. The Arabian and Chaldean ſhepherds were a kind of aſtrologers by profeſſion, and gave thoſe names to many of the ſtars which they ſtill retain.

The doctrine of the metempſychoſis, which the Egyptians adopted ſo readily into their religion, and which Pythagoras afterwards imported thence into Greece, was, beyond all doubt, of eaſtern extraction. This opinion, very probably, aroſe from ſome remaining impreſſions of the fall of man, that ſtill kept hold of the minds of thoſe that lived ſo near the time and ſcene in which it happened. And, as the origin of evil has been a matter of curious diſquiſition among the inquiſitive of all ages; ſo, among thoſe ſubtle philoſophers of the Eaſt, who had an uncommon turn for ſuch dark ſpeculations, any hypotheſis that ſerved to remove the difficulty but one ſtep farther back, would be gladly embraced, concerning a topic of all others the moſt abſtruſe, and the moſt incomprehenſible to the human mind.

It is not at all unlikely, that the building of Babel in the plains of Shinar, which took place immediately after the flood, firſt ſet men the example of building in thoſe parts; and that even the Egyptians might have borrowed the firſt idea of their pyramids, and other ſtupendous works, from the ſame original.

In general, it may be obſerved, from the immenſe ſtructure of Babel, the magnificence of the Babylonian walls, and the ſtatelineſs of the Egyptian pyramids; that the luxury and pride of theſe ancient nations led them to works of vaſtly greater pomp and expence than any the moderns can boaſt of. Yet, from theſe very buildings, though aſtoniſhingly great, but defective in elegance, we may gueſs the taſte of thoſe times to have been groſs, and the genius rude.

Indeed it is preſumeable that the fine arts naturally aſſociate together, from the near relation in which they all ſtand to one another; and as we have never heard of renowned poets or ſtatuaries among the Babylonians, that conſequently they could never have a very elegant taſte in any other of the polite arts. Magnificence and a pompouſneſs of manner they might poſſeſs; but, like the modern Chineſe, they would ſhow in their deſigns more of the monſtrous extravagance of art, than of the ſimple and pleaſing dignity of nature.

Compare to thoſe immenſe eaſtern works, the Grecian architecture of later date, the noble remains of which, at Balbec and Palmyra, in the iſlands of the Archipelago, and in many parts of Greece, excite, to this hour, our higheſt admiration.

The beautiful remains of ancient painting, ſtatuary, medals, and gems, beſides thoſe of architecture, lately found upon the diſcovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii, all of them in the pureſt Greek ſtyle, ſtill farther confirm our admiration of the taſte and genius of that wonderful people.

On the other hand it muſt be granted, that the Greeks themſelves, with all their ingenuity, derived many reſources either more immediately from the Babylonians, or mediately from the Egyptians and Phœnicians. We have already mentioned the metempſychoſis as owing its origin to the ſame quarter, as alſo phyſics, aſtronomy, and moral philoſophy.

SECTION IV.

The Same Subject continued.

A CERTAIN mediocrity, however, of abilities, has, in general, characterized the nations of the Eaſt from remoteſt time; the natural conſequence, no doubt, of their climate and ſoil, which warm, relax, and diſpoſe to diſſipa-

tion. Hence thoſe nations, though naturally ingenious, have been always retarded in their progreſs in the arts; eſpecially in thoſe of the intellectual or finer kind that require any great or perſevering exertions.

A certain length, indeed, they have gone in moſt or all of theſe, but they have, for the moſt part, ſhown more ardour than ability, and more ingenuity than judgment or ſolidity.

The Arabs have been always much the ſame in character; alert, active, ingenious, nimble in horſemanſhip, and addicted to plunder. At one period, (during the califate), they either invented or improved ſeveral curious ſciences, ſuch as algebra, chemiſtry, medicine; which, along with other aſſiſtances, aided to rekindle the lamp of learning in Europe, after it had been extinguiſhed for many centuries during the dark and Gothic ages.

The ancient Perſians were famous for aſtronomy and other ſciences; dextrous in archery; ambitious and reſtleſs in war. They are ſtill ingenious in the arts; excel in poetry, but retain, in a great meaſure, their priſtine effeminacy and love of pleaſure.

The Indians throughout the whole extent of the Mogul empire, as well as in the kingdoms of Ava, Siam and Pegu, are univerſally characterized, as particularly ingenious in the nicer mechanic arts, ſuch as weaving, colouring, japanning. They are in general a mild and harmleſs people, excepting the Malayeſe, who are ſaid to be treacherous, and addicted to plunder.

Porcelane-making is peculiar to the Chineſe, who are indeed ſtill more active than the Indians, more moderate in their paſſions; and, with ſome exceptions, are, perhaps, the moſt enlightened, virtuous, and induſtrious of all pagan nations.

Upon the whole, from the heat of the climate, and the luxuriance of the ſoil, which incline to voluptuouſneſs, theſe eaſtern nations are in general luxurious, but withal quick and lively, and in a certain degree induſtrious and active.

Their genius, indeed, is moderate, being more acute than profound, more ſhrewd than ſolid. Like their bodies, their minds are but of middling ability. Neither Newtons nor Shakeſpeares have ever ariſen among them; few great warriors; their philoſophy has been more of the moral than of the phyſical kind; and though they may have excelled in the ſofter ſorts of poetry, it is probable that they want force and elevation for its more grand and noble exertions.

Moreover, if we take a view of the different nations that lie more to the north, we ſhall find them, if not more effeminate and luxurious, at leaſt more indolent and inactive than thoſe juſt now mentioned. The Aſiatic Turks, particularly, come under this deſcription. Whether their ſpirits are naturally flatter, or that their continual uſe of opium, and the character of their religion, all contribute to this ſupine ſolemnity, is hard to determine: But they are grave and ſilent in the extreme. Their indolence is exceſſive, and their ignorance equal to their indolence.

In this torpid ſtate of ignorance and inſipidity lie buried their large poſſeſſions in Aſia Minor, Greece, Egypt, Barbary, Syria, part of Arabia, and the Holy-land.

Such, and ſo ſucceſsful has the Koran been, (when joined to the above cauſes and the deſpotiſm and barbarity of Tartar-genius), in baniſhing arts and humanity from a very conſiderable portion of the habitable globe.

In fine, the northern nations of Aſia, have been remarkable for nothing but a bold ferocious ſpirit, a genius for war, and ſudden and deſtructive invaſions of the countries around them.

Some exceptions, however, muſt be made to this remark. Gengis-Khan and Tamerlane were both as eminent for their magnificence and encouragement of learning, as for their renown in war. Enriched by the ſpoils of the Eaſt, theſe great conquerors reared cities in deſarts, and tried to fix the roving Tartar, by introducing architecture, letters, and the other fine arts.

But this light was only a flaſh, which for a moment il-

lumined, without diſpelling that thick cloud of ignorance which has always covered theſe dreary and inhoſpitable regions. This country of Tartary, of immenſe extent, and far larger than all Europe, is the ſame over which wandered the ancient Scythians, the native hive, whence iſſued, in ſucceſſive ſwarms, thoſe barbarous hords that overwhelmed the Roman empire, peopled the northern parts of Europe, gave emperors to China and Indoſtan, and detached colonies to plant a new world in the weſtern continent.

It may, therefore, with juſtice be concluded, that though the arts and ſciences have taken their riſe in the Eaſt, and have thence travelled weſtward, firſt to Egypt, and afterwards to Greece and Rome, that they have generally improved in their progreſs in proportion to the nature of the ſoil and climate, and the ardour with which they have been purſued; that neither the warmer nor colder regions have been greatly favourable to their culture, the former relaxing, the latter contracting the human faculties; that in the temperate climes of Europe they have flouriſhed to moſt advantage; that it is probable they will thence migrate to the weſtern continent in order to enlighten a new world; that they will finally ſpread themſelves over the moſt ſavage tribes, and, with their ſacred influence, poliſh and improve the moſt uncivilized nations.

PART II.

Grecian Literature.

SECTION I.

Of the origin of Grecian Literature, and of the earlieſt Writers.

THE invention of letters the Greeks derived from the Phœnicians, who being the firſt navigators, were led to invent written language for the greater ſecurity and diſpatch in their mercantile tranſactions.

As to their theology, it ſeemed more peculiarly their own; their oracles were peculiar; their worſhip of deified heroes connects them with the Gothic or Celtic nations; their ſacrifices and funeral ceremonies were partly borrowed, and partly their own; but their fables of the Elyſian fields and Tartarus were taken from the Egyptians.

The Greeks, for their improvement in language, as well as in other arts, owed a great deal to the detached manner in which they lived in ſeparate and independent ſtates. The manners of two of the moſt diſtinct and diſtant nations in the world cannot be more different than were thoſe of the Lacedemonians and Athenians; though they dwelt in each others neighbourhood. The laws and inſtitutions of their ſeveral founders and legiſlators, no doubt, gave a different caſt to the minds of the people; and this, heightened by the continual jealouſy and diſtance which prevailed between them, gave riſe, in a great meaſure, to that diſparity both in manners and language which forms one of the moſt agreeable contraſts in the world.

But the Athenians bore away the palm, if not for military

glory and purity of manners, at leaſt for their progreſs in the arts, from all the ſtates of Greece.

The nature of their government was ſuch as gave more ſcope to their natural genius than the Spartan polity did to theirs. As their rulers were generally ſet up and ſupported by the people, it became an object of concern to the former to court the favour of the latter by all means in their power.

As nothing could be more popular and powerful than eloquence, therefore this art was cultivated with the greateſt induſtry and application. All the flowers of rhetoric, and all the graces of ſpeech were employed to work upon the minds of the people. Hence their language, naturally ſweet, became more and more harmonious. Pure, nervous, and copious in its expreſſion; and in its pace ſoft and majeſtic, it ſupplied, like a fine and vaſt river, thoſe rich harveſts of eloquence, hiſtory, and poetry, that flouriſhed to ſuch a degree in this favourable ſoil, as rendered Greece the wonder of the world.

There never was a language ſo excellent as the Greek, nor ever will be; as there never was ſo pure and rich a fountain from which to draw one, nor ſo many happy and concurrent circumſtances to favour its refinement. And that there never will be one to compare with it, we may judge from the mixed ſtate of all modern tongues. Indeed the French, in point of accuracy, approaches it the neareſt; but, in every other reſpect, it is as much inferior, as the ſound of a pipe is inferior to the ſound of an organ.

Even in Homer's time, and probably before it, the Greeks muſt have made great progreſs in literature. His poems are the moſt excellent, not only in regard of invention and language, but even of judgment and contrivance, that ever the world ſaw.

What helps or aſſiſtances he had either from his cotemporaries, or thoſe that went before him, we cannot with certainty tell; but, it is extremely probable, that in his time, Greece was highly improved in laws, government, ſciences, and arts.

Beſides the active and inquiſitive nature of the Greeks; the inſtitution of the Olympic games greatly favoured their intercourſe with other nations, and their conſequent improvements.

Not only military exerciſes, feats of ſtrength, and activity of body, were tried at this tribunal, and received proportioned honours; but prizes were propoſed to the efforts of genius; and literary merit departed crowned with the wreath that was at firſt adjudged only to exertions of the corporeal kind.

On this occaſion it was that Herodotus, the father of hiſtorians, put in his claim for glory; and, in a full aſſembly of all Greece, recited aloud thoſe nine books of hiſtory, which are ſtill extant; and which, on account of their peculiar ſweetneſs and elegance of ſtyle, were honoured by this auguſt aſſembly with the name of the nine muſes.

Thucydides, we are told, being then but a boy, was ſo taken with them at their recital, and with the praiſes which the author received, that he himſelf was inflamed with the like glorious ardour; and, from that moment, applied himſelf to the writing of hiſtory.

Heſiod mentions, in one of his poems, a conteſt he had with a poetical rival, for the prize of poetry; and, did he not add that he himſelf gained the victory, I ſhould incline to believe that this rival was Homer; notwithſtanding that Herodotus would make us believe the contrary, by placing Heſiod much later than Homer. I am ſo far of a different opinion, that I imagine he was a little elder, though ſtill his cotemporary. His total ſilence of Homer, during the courſe of his poems, very much countenances this opinion, and makes it probable that ſome rivalſhip and jealouſy ſubſiſted between them; as we find Virgil ſilent of Horace, perhaps, for the ſame reaſon.

The ſimplicity of ſtyle obſervable in Heſiod is another argument in our favour. His ſubjects, indeed, are moſtly didactic, and therefore leſs ſuſceptible of embelliſhment than Homer's. In his *Theogonia* and *Shield of Hercules*, however,

where he has moſt ſcope for the ſublime, he exerts it indeed, but ſtill with reſerve and a tempered modeſty. On the other hand, Homer, on great occaſions, calls forth all his powers, and, though ſtill ſimple in his language, blazes continually in the energy of his thoughts, and fire of his deſcriptions.

As there is a ſtriking ſimilarity between the ſtyle of both poets, ſo it is probable that Homer, beſides his expreſſions, might have borrowed his machinery from Heſiod. The *Theogonia* might have given him the firſt hint of introducing the gods into his work; which appears ſo uſeful an embelliſhment, that without it an epic poem loſes half its beauty.

The *Shield of Hercules* may be conſidered as the prototype of the *Shield of Achilles*, and the very original from which it was drawn. After all, in point of genius, I think Heſiod bears hardly the ſame proportion to Homer that Lucretius does to Virgil.

Homer was ſomewhat elder than Solomon, if he lived, as Herodotus ſays, 168 years after the Trojan war. But, for the above reaſons, I plant him near 200 years later, viz. about the firſt Olympiad, and a few years before the building of Rome.

It is obſervable that Heſiod's *Shield* has been imitated, not only by Homer, but by Virgil, Camoens, and Taſſo, in their different poems, which proves what a beauty this poetical embelliſhment is deemed. The embroidered robe on the couch of Thetis, as deſcribed by Catullus, in his "Mar-"riage of Peleus and Thetis," (a poem which I have tranſlated into Engliſh verſe), is another beauty of a ſimilar kind.

About the time of Servius Tullius, flouriſhed the ſeven wiſe-men of Greece; to whom ſucceeded Æſop the firſt writer of fables; and Pythagoras, who firſt called himſelf a philoſopher. Before him, they were called wiſe-men or ſages.

Then, likewiſe, flouriſhed the lyric poets Alcæus, Sappho, Simonides, Anacreon, and Pindar. Nor muſt we forget Mimnermus, the firſt writer of love-elegies; whoſe maxim was:

Τι δε βιος; τι δε τερπνον αλις χρυσης Αφροδιτης;

All theſe were maſters and firſt performers in the art; and ſet the example to the Romans to follow their ſteps in the different departments in which they choſe to ſhine.

SECTION II.

Of the Grecian Philoſophers.

THALES the Mileſian, and Pythagoras of Samos, were among the earlieſt and beſt of the Grecian philoſophers: the latter is ſaid, and with great probability, to have underſtood the true ſyſtem of the univerſe; and taught the tranſmigration of ſouls, as borrowed from the Gymnoſophiſts or Indian bramins.

The former, who lived 600 years before Chriſt, was both an excellent moraliſt and natural philoſopher, for ſo early a period. He is thought to be the firſt Grecian who merited the name of an aſtronomer.

Anaximander, Anaximenes, and afterwards Anaxagoras, improved upon the former diſcoveries; but the latter, in particular, who had a wild, but ſublime and extenſive genius, and more accuracy of judgment than his predeceſſors.

Zeno was the founder of the ſtoical ſchool; and Epicurus of that one that goes under his name to this day: both went to extremes; one founding happineſs or the chief good on apathy, or an inſenſibility to pleaſure and pain; the other, on pleaſure alone.—Another ſect, called the Electic, embraced a middle courſe betwixt the two.

Socrates, the wiſeſt and beſt of all the philoſophers, followed very much this middle path; and was the pureſt, both in practice and doctrine, of all the Grecian ſages.

On account of his dedicating his ſtudies and doctrines chiefly to morality, he is ſaid to have firſt brought philoſophy from the heavens and the ſtars, about which ſhe had

hitherto been employed, to dwell in cities and ſocieties of men.

Socrates, of whoſe ſcholars we are ſoon to ſpeak, was, perhaps, one of the beſt and greateſt men of antiquity. As Homer was in poetry, he was without doubt the great fountain-head of all that was moſt valuable in the Grecian philoſophy; and his morality ſeems to have approached the neareſt of any to that of the great founder of the Chriſtian faith.

In explaining his philoſophy, by familiar alluſions and parables, he alſo reſembled him.

The Greeks, therefore, at this period, were the moſt diſtinguiſhed nation on earth for learning and arts. From the days of Homer and Heſiod, down to thoſe of Sophocles and Euripides, we ſee them going on in one continued courſe of improvement. Philoſophy went hand in hand with literature; and, in the age of Ariſtotle, we believe it to be arrived at its higheſt pitch of refinement.

The excellent application which this philoſopher made of it to poetry and eloquence; the laws he thence deduces with ſuch juſtneſs and preciſion on the œconomy of theſe two arts, at once evince the uncommon acuteneſs of his genius, and point out a ſure path to ſucceeding ages, to guide themſelves in their intellectual exertions by the rules of right reaſon and common ſenſe.

Plato, his cotemporary and fellow-diſciple, had merit; though of a different kind. He had more brilliance of fancy, than ſolidity of judgment; hence his diction is often more elegant than his reaſoning is juſt. But he has made amends for this, by the univerſal good tendency of his morals, the ſerious grandeur of his thoughts, and the extraordinary beauty and ſplendor of his ſtyle. Add to this a ſimplicity joined with majeſty; in which, perhaps, none of his countrymen, if we except Homer, ever equalled him. Xenophon, his worthy condiſciple, we have characterized elſewhere.

Theophraſtus and Cebes followed; the former both a

moraliſt and natural philoſopher trode the ſteps of his maſter Ariſtotle. His *Characters* are equally eminent for their juſtneſs of painting and ſweetneſs of ſtyle; and are imitated by Bruyere and others.

His hiſtory of plants is allowed great merit by the naturaliſts.

As for Cebes he has immortalized his fame by that Tablature of human life that paſſes under his name. The Viſions of Mirza by Addiſon are a kind of diſtant imitation of this beautiful allegory; and, though very ſtriking, hardly equal to the original.

SECTION III.

Of the Grecian Orators—Demoſthenes characteriſed.

NOR muſt we overlook the Grecian orators. Demoſthenes, who flouriſhed ſomewhat later than the above-mentioned writers, may, with juſtice, be ſtyled the prince of Grecian eloquence. Iſocrates charms by the harmony of his periods; Lyſias and Iſæus by a certain attic grace; Eſchines by a manly and copious oratory; but Demoſthenes ſurpaſſes them all in fire, vehemence, preciſion, and cloſeneſs.

He excels in brevity, yet is clear and ſtrong; his reaſoning carries conviction in every word; he thunders, he lightens: he rolls his ſentences with a kind of rapid harmony, yet ſeemingly without art; and in this way he overpowers us before we are aware.

From his conciſeneſs ariſes his ſtrength; he is never diffuſe, nor, like Cicero, weakens his ſtyle, by beſtowing an additional word for the ſake of rounding a period. He ſtrives not to pleaſe, but to perſuade; and his arguments are as ſtrong and cloſe as his ſtyle.

Upon the whole, he excels in that kind of eloquence which is the reverſe of the copious, the ſweet, or the flowery; his manner is ardent, conciſe, and ſimple; quite

different from the Ciceronian, which is copious, flowery, and artificial.

What muſt we think of that eloquence that rouſed Greece, ſet on foot armies, ſhook the throne of Philip, and agitated the people to ſuch a degree as to render them impatient to undertake the moſt arduous enterprizes in defence of their country, and the deſtruction of tyranny? Such was the eloquence of Demoſthenes.

SECTION IV.

Of the Grecian Dramatic Writers.

MUCH about this period flouriſhed Sophocles and Euripides, theſe moſt exquiſite tragedians, and glories of the Athenian ſtage.

Poetry now enjoyed her greateſt triumph, when, to the moſt charming flowers of eloquence, ſhe could join the wreath of virtue, and the palm of philoſophy. Happy had this conjunction reformed the Athenian manners, as it delighted their fancy, and wrought on their paſſions. But neither the ſublimity of Sophocles, nor pathos of Euripides, produced this effect.

Eſchylus, the father of Greek tragedy, was ſomewhat older than theſe; but ſtill their cotemporary. He was the firſt who brought the drama from the Theſpian cart to the ſtage. His character is ſublimity and vehemence joined to rudeneſs and obſcurity; which laſt throw a veil over his merit, and render him but little known. His two ſucceſſors, already mentioned, improved upon him conſiderably.

Euripides, as being the diſciple of Socrates, is perhaps the moſt didactic and moral of all tragic authors, if we except Shakeſpeare. He is more pathetic than Sophocles, though not ſo ſublime or deſcriptive. His diction, however, is ſufficiently dignified and elegant; and his verſification is poſſeſſed of the greateſt eaſe, ſweetneſs, and variety.

Beſides the elegance and pathos, ſo peculiar and delightful in theſe poets, one can never enough admire that chaſtity and purity of morals that predominate every where in their drama. Love, the hinge upon which modern tragedy ſeems to turn, is hardly noticed. The truth of hiſtory and nature is not violated to make room for a romantic paſſion that intoxicates the brain; and, if it does not corrupt, at beſt but amuſes, without improving the heart.

As for Ariſtophanes, their cotemporary, and the father of the ancient comedy, notwithſtanding his attic ſalt and elegance; he has too much of a rude buffoonery, and that too exerted againſt the moſt worthy characters, ſuch as Socrates and Euripides, that cannot but diſguſt a well-formed taſte, accuſtomed to the chaſter ſtrains of his two dramatic brethren.

Upon a compariſon of theſe poets with the moderns, we muſt allow their plots are more ſimple and uniform; their characters, in general, more natural; their action and fable more important; and their language more harmonious and elegant. Their chorus, in particular, exhibits ſuch a ſhow of picturesque beauties as can hardly be paralleled in our times; beſides its being, in other reſpects, a ſuitable and agreeable accompaniment of the drama. However, it may be proper here to obſerve, that Milton has moſt happily imitated thoſe choruſes in his Comus and Sampſon Agoniſtes; which diſplay beauties of this kind not unworthy of the ancients.

On the other hand, the modern plays, from the ſtrong mixture of love in them, are frequently more ſoft and tender than the ancient; but this tenderneſs too often degenerates into inſipidity. Shakeſpeare alone, with little exception, has managed this paſſion with a true taſte; no rant, no raving, no unnatural wildneſs; all the paſſions in him are touched with the hand of a maſter; and love, which appears among the reſt, (accidentally introduced, not obtruded), ſpeaks its own native language; the language of the utmoſt delicacy and tenderneſs.

SECTION V.

General Character of the Greek Writers.

HAVING now carried the Greek writers to the age of Alexander the Great, when their language arrived at its greateſt refinement, we ſhall conclude with a ſketch of their characters drawn in miniature.

What particularly diſtinguiſhes them is, firſt, a certain delicacy joined with ſweetneſs, peculiar to themſelves: ſecondly, a certain chaſtiſed elegance, approaching to dryneſs.

Examples of the firſt kind, are: Herodotus, Xenophon, Theocritus, Anacreon.

Of the ſecond are: Pindar*, Thucydides, Demoſthenes, Ariſtotle, Theophraſtus.

The more raiſed and elevated writers, are: Homer, Plato, Lucian, Sophocles, Eſchylus, Euripides.

Upon the whole, the compoſitions of the Greeks, like their architecture, boaſt thoſe ſimple and ſublime beauties that are the picture of nature and truth only; nothing is exaggerated or diſtorted; all is delicacy, grace, and ſweet ſimplicity. What an idea do they give of the virtue and purity of a people that in their beſt times had never their equals; and ſtill in their works ſhine to ſucceeding ages unrivalled patterns of beauty, ſimplicity, and unaffected greatneſs?

SECTION VI.

Lives and Characters of eminent Greek Writers.

ANACREON:

A LYRIC poet born at Teios, a city of Ionia, flouriſhed about 532 years before the Chriſtian æra. Polycrates, ty-

* It is ſaid that Thucydides formed himſelf upon the conciſe manner of Pindar.

rant of Samos invited him to his court, and made him ſhare with him in his buſineſs and pleaſures. Pleaſure he was fond of to exceſs; and his philoſophy ſeems to have been entirely that of Epicurus, ſo that Polycrates could not have choſen a more accompliſhed maſter of revels.

His philoſophy was to make the moſt of the preſent life, without reference to futurity. Notwithſtanding his diſſipation he lived to the age of 85; being choaked, we are told, by a grape-ſtone that ſtuck in his throat, as he was regaling on ſome new wine.

There is but a ſmall part of his works that remain; for, beſides odes and epigrams, he compoſed elegies, hymns, and iambics.

His poems, which are extant, were reſcued from oblivion by Henry Stevens. His manner in theſe Odes is ingenious, but peculiar; and has never been rightly copied. Horace has imitated ſome of his beauties, particularly his Bacchanalian odes. But there is a kind of allegory in him, which, though generally natural, is ſomewhat obſcure, and difficult either to imitate or explain!

His ſubjects are often trivial enough; but are rendered agreeable by his wit, which is of the laughing kind, abounding in ſmiles and graces, and tinctured with ſatire. No author's temper was ever more ſtrongly impreſſed on his works; for, by reading even a few odes, we ſee at once what kind of a man he was.

PINDAR:

The prince of Lyric poets, was born at Thebes 520 years before Chriſt. He received his firſt muſical inſtructions from his father, who was a flute-player; after which, according to Suidas, he ſtudied under Myrtis, a lady of diſtinguiſhed abilities in lyric poetry. He was afterwards the pupil of Corinna, a lady of equal genius in the lyric muſe.

As Pindar's firſt eſſays were wild and luxuriant, upon communicating his attempts to the laſt lady, ſhe told him

that he ſhould ſow with the hand, and not empty his whole ſack at once.

Pindar, however, ſoon quitted theſe female leading-ſtrings, and became the diſciple of Simonides, now arrived at an extreme old age. After which he ſoon ſurpaſſed all his maſters, and acquired the higheſt reputation over Greece; but, like a true prophet, he was leſs honoured in his own country than elſewhere; for, at Thebes, he was often pronounced vanquiſhed in the muſical and poetical conteſts by candidates of inferior merit.

Myrtis and Corinna afterwards diſputed the prize with him at Thebes. He obtained a victory over Myrtis; but was vanquiſhed five different times by Corinna. Perhaps, this was owing, ſays Pauſanias, to the latter's beauty, which influenced the judges.

Pindar had the mortification, before he quitted Thebes, to ſee his Dithyrambics traduced, abuſed, and turned into ridicule by the comic poets of his time; and Athenæus tells us, that he was ſeverely cenſured by his brother lyrics, for his being a lipogrammatiſt, and compoſing an ode from which he excommunicated the letter S. Whether theſe cenſures proceeded from envy cannot be determined.

Pindar, however, upon leaving Thebes, became the idol of Greece, and was courted by all the heroes, princes, and potentates of his time. He ſeems often to have been preſent at the four great feſtivals of the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, and Iſthmian games, as may be ſeen from the odes he compoſed on theſe occaſions, which are in the true ſpirit of lyric poetry, ſublime, full of rapture, wild and abrupt in their tranſitions, conciſe, obſcure, and moral.

He alſo compoſed elegies on the death of great perſonages, which were eſteemed as maſter-pieces of the kind; but none of them are now extant.

Pindar lived to the great age of 90: being, along with Anacreon and Sophocles, the longeſt liver of all the poets. Moſt others have been generally ſhort-lived; which happens, perhaps, either from the delicacy of their bodily frame, the

too frequent irregularity and misfortunes of their lives, or their intenſe application to ſtudy above their ſtrength.

SOPHOCLES:

Was archon or chief magiſtrate of Athens, in which office he commanded the forces of the republic, and ſignalized himſelf by his valour on many great occaſions.

He compoſed plays till he was very old, and retained his genius to the laſt; for he compoſed his Oedipus Coloneus, when, on account of his great age, he was alledged by his heirs, who wanted to graſp his eſtate, to be in a ſtate of dotage. But producing this play before the judges who ſat upon the cauſe, he ſaid that he would give up his title, if they thought a dotard could produce ſuch a piece. Upon which he was honourably acquitted. Of a 100 tragedies he is ſaid to have written, only ſeven have been preſerved to our time. He died aged 91; about 406 years B. C.

THEOCRITUS:

Was born at Syracuſe; but lived at the court of Egypt, in the reign of Ptolomy Philadelphus, about 300 years B. C. He was made keeper (by that prince) of the famous Alexandrian Library, and was ſucceeded in that office by Apollonius Rhodius, the author of the Argonautic expedition, a beautiful poem ſtill extant.

It is ſaid, that, at his return to Syracuſe, venturing to ſpeak ill of Hiero king of that city, he was put to death by his order. There are ſtill extant his Idylliums in the Doric dialect, with ſome other poems; all of great merit; particularly on account of their admirable ſimplicity, and the ſweetneſs of the dialect in which they are written.

He may be juſtly conſidered as the father of paſtoral poetry. Grace and ſimplicity are his characteriſtics. He is ſometimes tender; often excels in deſcription, and has, moreover, a kind of humour peculiar to himſelf. His firſt ſix Idylliums are all inſtances of the above beauties; although ſeveral of the reſt are equally excellent. He repre-

ſents the manners, pleaſantry and humour of peaſants and ſhepherds, with peculiar propriety and exactneſs; and, in this ſpecies of writing, ſtands unrivalled.

DEMOSTHENES:

The prince of orators, flouriſhed in the time of Philip king of Macedon: ſomewhat prior to the age of Alexander.

No orator ever cultivated his parts to more advantage; or more overcame natural and almoſt inſuperable defects, by practice, art, and diligence. It is ſaid that he ſtudied Thucydides with great exactneſs; and read him many times over, before he began to compoſe. No orator was ever more laborious; and yet there is not the leaſt appearance of labour or affectation in his ſtyle. He uſes no circumlocutions, no idle parade of words; which might enfeeble the effects of his eloquence.

On the contrary, he comes to the point at once: his bold and deciſive eloquence ſtrikes like lightening; and produces inſtantaneous effects. And, in this way, he animated not only his countrymen the Athenians, but, by the matchleſs power of his oratory, gained over, in one day the Thebans, their mortal antagoniſts, to join the common confederacy; and this too in oppoſition to the famous orator Python of Byzantium, employed by Philip againſt him. His oration ſtruck the Thebans, though a dull people, with a kind of enthuſiaſm; and they inſtantly cried: "Come let us take "arms! let us march againſt Philip!"

The diſpute betwixt Eſchines and Demoſthenes is very famous. The affair was thus: The latter having rebuilt, at his own expence, the walls of Athens, the citizens out of gratitude honoured him with a golden crown, according to the decree of Cteſiphon to that purpoſe. But Eſchines, out of jealouſy and envy, cenſured this decree. The cauſe was to be pled before the people.

Nothing of the kind ever excited ſo much curioſity, or was pled with ſo much pomp. Vaſt was the concourſe from all parts of Greece, ſays Cicero, and no wonder; for what

ſight could be nobler than a conflict between two orators, each of them excellent in his way; both formed by nature, improved by art, and animated by perpetual feuds, and implacable animoſity.

Theſe two orations may juſtly be conſidered as the maſter-pieces of antiquity, eſpecially that of Demoſthenes. Cicero tranſlated the latter, a ſtrong proof of the high opinion he entertained of it. Unluckily for us, the preamble alone of that performance is now extant, which is ſufficient to make us regret the loſs of the reſt. The oration of Eſchines has come down entire; and is indeed a moſt valuable and finiſhed piece, whether we conſider the purity and elegance of the ſtyle, or the cloſeneſs and ſtrength of the argument; and we may gueſs that nothing could make it loſe its effect; but that it had to combat with Demoſthenes, in whoſe harangue there was, no doubt, more of that force and fire that nothing can reſiſt.

PLATO:

Plato was born at Athens 430 years B. C. He was a perſon of quality; being deſcended by his father from royal anceſtors, and by his mother from Solon. In his youth he was much addicted to poetry. He firſt wrote odes and dithyrambics, and afterwards epic poetry; which laſt, finding much inferior to Homer, he burned.

Soon after meeting with Socrates, he was ſo charmed with his way of diſcourſing, that he forſook poetry; and applied himſelf wholly to moral philoſophy. Eight years he lived with Socrates; in which time he committed, as did Xenophon, the ſubſtance of his maſter's doctrines to writing.

Upon Socrates's death, he retired in melancholy to Megara; where he was kindly received by Euclid, who had been one of that philoſopher's firſt ſcholars. He afterwards travelled in purſuit of knowledge. From Megara he went into Italy, where he conferred with Eurytus, Philolaus, and Archytas of Tarentum. Theſe were the moſt conſiderable

of the followers of Pythagoras; and from them he borrowed his natural philoſophy.

From thence he paſſed into Egypt; where he became acquainted with the Egyptian theology; their ſkill in geometry, aſtronomy; and, from their prieſts and wiſe-men, Pauſanias ſays, he learned the immortality, and alſo the tranſmigration of the ſoul. He at laſt travelled into Perſia to conſult the Magi about the religion of the country; and he deſigned penetrating even into India to viſit the Brachmans and Gymnoſophiſts; but the wars in Aſia hindered him.

Returning to Athens, he ſet up a ſchool of philoſophy in the Academy; a place of exercíſe in the ſuburbs beſet with woods. His fame was ſo great that he was ſent for to different courts, not only to teach the young men philoſophy, but alſo the laws of government. He went not to any of them, but gave rules of government to all.

He lived ſingle, yet ſoberly and chaſtly. He was a man of great virtue, yet exceedingly affable and eaſy. He converſed civilly with all the philoſophers of his time; although pride and envy were then at their height.

Ariſtotle, Hyperides, Demoſthenes, and Iſocrates were all his ſcholars. This extraordinary man being arrived at 81 years of age, died a very eaſy and peaceable death, in the midſt of an entertainment, according to ſome; but, according to Cicero, as he was writing.

Plato may be called the prince of the Grecian philoſophers that have left any thing in writing; and he appears to have come the neareſt to the ſpirit of his great maſter Socrates. His genius, as well as his temper, ſeem to have been of a turn truely divine; and wholly devoted to virtue.

Vaſt and ſublime in his conceptions, pure in his heart, and full of a ſimple but majeſtic eloquence, he inſtructs us with a pathetic philoſophy that outſhines all the ancients; and as he ſtrikes the imagination more, ſo he likewiſe may be ſaid to touch the heart more than any other writer of the ſame kind. Cicero knew the value of Plato, when he calls

him the divine, by way of diſtinction from all other philoſophers; and he certainly read and copied him more than any other.

His Dialogues contain the quinteſſence of the Socratic philoſophy, beſides the addition of may noble conceptions of his own; and they are peculiarly excellent on account of their ſtyle, which indeed is the grand pattern of the dialogue-ſtyle to ſucceeding writers. Cicero and Lucian, who are both eminent this way, muſt have profited much by having ſo good a maſter before them,

The method of throwing one's thoughts, upon any ſubject, into the form of dialogue, if done ſucceſsfully, muſt be allowed to have peculiar force and vivacity; but yet, to ſucceed in it, is a work of difficulty. A certain livelineſs of imagination, as well as acúteneſs and penetration of judgment, a quick comprehenſion of arguments on both ſides of a queſtion; together with a talent in drawing character, muſt join in forming the able dialogiſt. Shaftſbury, in his Characteriſtics, has imitated the dialogue-ſtyle, with no bad ſucceſs; although Xenophon, rather than Plato, ſeems to have been his favourite author. The firſt edition of Plato was publiſhed by Aldus at Venice in 1513.

XENOPHON:

An eminent general, philoſopher, and hiſtorian, was born at Athens; and became early a diſciple of Socrates, who is ſaid by Strabo to have ſaved his life in battle.

At the 50th year of his age he engaged in the expedition of Cyrus, and accompliſhed his celebrated retreat in fifteen months.

The jealouſy of the Athenians baniſhed him from his native city for engaging in the ſervice of Sparta and Cyrus. He therefore retired to Scillus, a town of Elis; where he built a temple to Diana, and devoted his leiſure to philoſophy and rural ſports.

Commotions ariſing in that country, he removed to Corinth, where he is ſaid to have compoſed his Grecian hiſtory; and to have died at the age of 90, in the year 360 B. C.

His works are written with great exactneſs; and flow with a tranſparent clearneſs, a native purity and ſweetneſs, that are the very quinteſſence of attic elegance. The beſt editions are thoſe of Franckfort and Oxford.

His Cyropædia ſeems to be a philoſophical romance, rather than a hiſtory; in which the ſimplicity of the Perſian manners affords an excellent moral lecture. The character of Cyrus is well delineated, breathing an air of humanity and juſtice that is ſeldom to be met with: his death-bed ſpeech is particularly excellent; and the ſtory of Panthea is ſo ſtriking, natural, and well-told, that it affords the reader as much pleaſure as any the fineſt tragedy in the world.

His Memorabilia Socratis are rather in a dry ſtyle; but yet they are an exact picture of the life and converſation of that divine man; even more ſo than the dialogue of Plato, who has intermixed a good deal of his own; and gives more ſcope to his imagination than Xenophon.

His Anabaſis, or Retreat of the 10,000, which he himſelf conducted, and wrote, has been compared to Cæſar's Commentaries; but ſeems to have ſome faults. It is too uniform and regular, and not written in the eaſy manner of memoirs, ſuch as thoſe of Julius Cæſar. It muſt, indeed, be allowed to poſſeſs much beauty of diction and maſtery in eloquence; both in particular deſcriptions, and ſeveral good harangues.

But Xenophon, in this work, is obſerved to be vain: he talks too much of himſelf, and omits no opportunity to ſet forth a certain Athenian to the beſt advantage. He praiſes, though with great addreſs and delicacy, his moderation and evenneſs of temper, his reſolution and foreſight and undaunted courage; his religion and eloquence, &c. &c. His own harangues are always extremely laboured, and never fail of producing their effect. In a word, with all the veil of the moſt refined modeſty with which he palliates and endeavours to cover his own praiſes, he is himſelf the hero of the piece, drawn indeed with maſterly art and delicacy; but, under this veil, lurks a concealed vanity, which one

would not have expected from a man of the first abilities, and one of the chief ornaments of the Socratic school.

Cæsar, in my opinion, evidenced a higher soul, by talking always of himself with a peculiar reserve and modesty; and never but when he ought. Yet I would not hence conclude, that the latter was a better man than the former; for, perhaps, Cæsar, under a veil of greater modesty, concealed a greater pride and a higher ambition.

I am rather inclined to agree with Cicero, when he says, (among other high encomiums on Xenophon), that his Praise of Agesilaus and Oeconomics alone, are such pictures and images of excellence, as none but the best of men could describe, and the best of men practise.

Even this same vanity which we condemn in the character of Xenophon, is somewhat palliated, though not excused; when we consider it as incident to other men of great eminence.

Cicero was full of it; and, for all his philosophy, managed it with much less delicacy than Xenophon.

Diogenes, and all the rest of the cynical sect, were exceedingly proud and conceited; although they can boast of no kind of comparison with the agreeable and smiling philosophy of Xenophon.

Lucretius, the great champion of Atheism, boasts in the most ostentatious manner of his *aurea dicta* and glorious doctrines borrowed from Epicurus; whom he celebrates as another sun arisen to enlighten a darkened world.

Sully, in his Memoirs of Henry the fourth of France, often speaks of himself with a degree of vanity and ostentation; and Cardinals Richelieu and de Retz were both vain men, though great politicians, but of much less honesty than Sully. Indeed Cardinal de Retz saw his follies at last, and candidly confessed his faults. See his Memoirs.

It were endless to mention instances both among men of learning and men of business and of the world, guilty of this most insinuating and prevalent of all passions, vanity; and which is the more to be lamented as it is often combined

with great parts; though, from many inſtances to the contrary, both ancient and modern, and from the moſt natural reflections on human nature, we may conclude, that it is ſeldom or never prevalent with men of the greateſt parts. Modeſty, on the contrary, is their characteriſtic. I inſtance Homer, Socrates, Plato, and Virgil, among the ancients; and Shakeſpeare, Bacon, Boyle†, Milton, and Newton, out of a hundred inſtances, among the moderns.

ARISTOTLE:

This chief of the Peripatetic philoſophers was born at Stagyra, a ſmall city in Macedon, in the 99th Olympiad, about 384 years B. C.

He went to Plato's ſchool at 18, and ſtudied till he was 37. He differed from his maſter in ſeveral tenets; which produced their ſeparation, and Ariſtotle ſet up a ſchool for himſelf in the Lycæum. As he gave his doctrines walking along among his auditors, his ſect aſſumed the name of Peripatetics. He died in his 63d year; two years after Alexander.

His genius ſeems to have been of the moſt comprehenſive kind; various, acute, and penetrating; but logical, dry and didactic. He was an excellent rhetorician aud critic; a natural philoſopher of the firſt rank; and, on every ſubject, he compoſed like a maſter. He wrote alſo of law, politics, and poetry; and even compoſed in the latter art no mean poem.

The fault of his ſtyle is, that it affects extreme conciſeneſs which renders it difficult and obſcure. His Art of Poetry, alone, has afforded ſubject for volumes of commentaries.

ARRIAN:

Xenophon's ſtyle, which is elegantly ſimple, was followed as a model by many ſucceeding writers. But, of all others, Arrian, the diſciple of Epictetus, who flouriſhed under the emperor Adrian, copied his manner with moſt exactneſs and merit.

† Sir Robert Boyle was among the firſt revivers of experimental philoſophy: he was a great and good man, and remarkable for modeſty.

Reſembling his maſter, in being a philoſopher, a general, and an hiſtorian; he wrote the campaigns of Alexander the Great in ſeven books, in imitation of Xenophon, who compoſed thoſe of Cyrus in the ſame number.

The beautiful ſimplicity with which this hiſtory is written, together with the fidelity of the narration, makes it highly intereſting.

Swift, who was not the moſt eaſy man in the world to pleaſe in his reading, mentions, in a letter to Mrs. Johnſtone, his having read over in an evening after coming home from a viſit, 200 pages of this book.

The Encheiridion of Epictetus, ſaid likewiſe to be compoſed by Arrian, is as remarkable for the beauty of its ſtyle, as for its morality. With what pleaſure and profit have I often peruſed this excellent little book, that contains ſuch valuable maxims, both of moral and prudential conduct, expreſſed with ſuch conciſeneſs as the memory eaſily retains, ſuch happy alluſions as delight the imagination, and ſuch juſtneſs and good ſenſe as gain at once the aſſent of the underſtanding!

PART III.

Roman Literature.

SECTION I.

Of the Origin of Roman Literature; and of the earlieſt Writers.

BEFORE the age of Alexander the Great, the Romans made but little progreſs in literature. Naturally rough and unpoliſhed, addicted to war, and ſtruggling in continual conflict, either with enemies abroad, or popular contentions at home, their language remained long in a ſavage ſtate.

Livius and Ennius, the one a tragic, the other an epic poet and ſatyriſt, were the firſt who began to clear it of its rudeneſs; though they were far from poliſhing it to that degree of elegance which it afterwards attained.

The truth is, the taſte of the Romans was, at that time, extremely coarſe; reliſhing nothing but wild ribaldry and low wit. Their military ſongs upon the occaſion of a triumph, were among their earlieſt ſpecimens in poetry; and were a kind of lampoons, in an ironical and jocular ſtyle, throwing reproaches on the commanders; and they were danced and ſung to by the ſoldiers in the proceſſion. They ſomewhat reſembled the Dithyrambics at the Grecian Bacchanalia; which, though rude at firſt, afterwards gave riſe to tragedy and comedy among that poliſhed people.

So, among the Romans, the verſes called Feſcennine, or Saturnian, were no other than rude ſatyrical ſongs; which, from their being uſed at their feſtivals or triumphs, came at

laſt to be admitted on their ſtage, accompanied with muſic and dances. Theſe, with little variation, for the ſpace of 120 years, ſerved inſtead of dramatic pieces; till Livius Andronicus undertook to write tragedies and comedies on the more enlarged and correct model of the Greeks.

Somewhat later, (viz. in the year of Rome 550), flouriſhed Plautus, that indelicate, though witty comic poet; to whom ſucceeded Pacuvius and Accius, tragedians; all of whom contributed more or leſs to the refinement of their native tongue.

Plautus was of Sarſina, a ſmall town in Umbria. He was ſome years younger than Nævius or Ennius, and died the firſt year of the elder Cato's cenſorſhip. His language is certainly excellent, and in the pureſt ſtyle, while his jeſts are rude and indelicate: he has ſeveral coarſe and obſcene touches; and has much the ſame fault with Ariſtophanes. At the ſame time, the humour of many of his ſcenes is ſtrikingly juſt and comic; and above any thing of the kind in the Roman writers.

This is the conſtant opinion of Varro, Cicero, A. Gellius, Macrobius, and the moſt eminent modern critics; ſuch as Lipſius, the Scaligers, Muretus, Turnebus.

But Terence, the friend and companion of Scipio Africanus, forming himſelf upon the model of Menander, ſurpaſſed all his predeceſſors in purity and elegance, and carried the Roman language, as far as the ſtage is concerned, to the higheſt pitch of perfection; while the juſtneſs and delicacy of his characters entitle him to the higheſt praiſe.

However, it is to be preſumed, with all their ſucceſs in comedy, that the Romans, in the tragic drama, fell far ſhort of the Greeks; ſince none of their pieces in this way have reached us, except thoſe of Seneca; although many were compoſed before his time by different authors. Of theſe, if we may judge from the remaining fragments, the ſtyle was nowiſe excellent; wanting the cloſeneſs and harmony of the Greeks.

But were there not other and ſtill greater deficiences

ariſing from the nature of tragedy which no powers of art or language could ſupply?

In comedy the Romans might excel; as there the characters are taken from general life, with which all are acquainted; ſo that they had nothing to do but paint the manners as they ſaw them. In tragedy the characters were more particular, the action more important; and in order that the whole might make a deeper impreſſion, ſome ſtory venerable for its antiquity was generally pitched upon, in which all the principal actors were perſons of royal or noble birth; and ſometimes gods and demigods were taken into the ſcene.

How then could the Romans, whoſe hiſtory extended backward only a few hundred years, eaſily find a ſtory, either for its antiquity, grandeur, or other tragical conſequence, ſufficiently adapted to this ſerious and moſt important part of the drama? They were, therefore, obliged to have recourſe to the Grecian fable, which amply ſupplied them with ſubject; but of which all the beſt and the moſt intereſting parts had been already pre-engaged by the fineſt Grecian writers.

With theſe it was in vain to contend; as, beſides the ſuperiority of their language and fable, their genius ſeemed naturally more elevated, verſatile and inventive; had more ſenſibility with more paſſion; a nicer diſcrimination of character; in fine, they poſſeſſed all thoſe requiſites peculiar to poetry in general, but more eſpecially that kind of it exhibited on the ſtage.

To prove the juſtneſs of this remark, one has but to read a few pages in Sophocles, Euripides, or Ariſtophanes; all of whom, beſides their ſuperior excellence of ſtyle, far ſurpaſs the Roman authors in wit, humour, character, fable, paſſion, and ſentiment.

One ſpecies of poetry, indeed, but of a different kind from the former, the Romans not only invented about this time, but afterwards carried to the greateſt perfection. I mean Satire, the outlines of which being firſt ſketched by

Ennius, were thereafter more fully drawn by Lucilius; who, however rude in his verſification and manner, ſhowed by his matter, to what uſeful purpoſes this branch of the poetic art might be extended. Accordingly, his ſucceſſors, Horace, Juvenal, and Perſius; the firſt with the gentler weapons of ſmiling ſatire; the other two with the zeal and eloquence of a noble indignation, attacked, ridiculed, and ſtigmatized vice in all ranks, and wherever it was to be found.

Poetry has in all ages enjoyed a perſcriptive right to ſerve in the cauſe of virtue; in ſatire ſhe aſſumes her ſevereſt tone, and appears, as it were, in perſon, to brand the guilty, and vindicate the laws of morality. Dramatic and epic compoſitions inſtruct by example and indirectly: Satire carries on the work of reformation by a bold and open attack on whatſoever obſtructs her courſe: She ranges over the wide-extended fields of folly and vice; expoſes and combats whatever is ludicrous in the one, or deteſtable in the other. In a word, mankind is her province; and her object the numberleſs foibles, caprices, and enormities of the human race.

SECTION II.

Of the Roman Hiſtorians, Philoſophers and Orators.

AS the Romans increaſed in opulence and empire, the ſciences flouriſhed of courſe; for, beſides poetry, eloquence hiſtory and philoſophy, made no contemptible figure, even before the age of Auguſtus.

Scipio and Lælius were themſelves learned, and encouraged learning in others. Cato the elder was an able orator, and well verſed in the Grecian literature; which he made himſelf maſter of at a very advanced age. Philoſophy and rhetoric were publicly ſtudied at Rome by the young nobility, under different maſters. And thoſe who intended a more complete courſe, were commonly ſent to

Athens, as to a ſuperior ſchool to finiſh, in the precincts of the Academy or the Lycæum, where Plato and Ariſtotle had prelected, that education which was then held faſhionable; or even neceſſary to arrive at any diſtinguiſhed eminence in the republic.

About this time flouriſhed Panætius and Poſidonius the philoſophers; Polybius, that eminent and philoſophical Greek hiſtorian; Vitruvius, the famous Roman architect; and Diodorus Siculus, the univerſal hiſtorian; all of whom lived ſomewhat prior to the Auguſtan period.

Lucretius their cotemporary, and the patron of epicuriſm, ſeems the firſt poet that profeſſedly made poetry the handmaid of philoſophy. He has had many followers; ſome, perhaps, who have embraced more rational ſyſtems; but few who equalled him in genius. His ſtyle is luminous, ſimple, harmonious, ſtrong: the beginnings and concluſions of his books are at once warmed with the fire of divine poetry, and illuminated with the pureſt moral philoſophy. Although we reject his ſyſtem, we muſt admire his genius.

The Anti-Lucretius by Cardinal Polignac, though poſſeſt of great merit, is inferior by many degrees: it likewiſe labours under material errors, by adopting the Carteſian ſyſtem, which, in natural philoſophy, is little better than that of Epicurus.

About the time of Cicero, both philoſophy and oratory were carried to the greateſt height. The ſenate and the forum gave full ſcope to the latter; and we are not to wonder that the Romans, during the flouriſhing ſtate of liberty, were excited to practiſe and excel in eloquence; conſidering the prodigious effects it has in a popular government.

Cicero, in his book De Claris Oratoribus, after enumerating thoſe that were moſt remarkable in Greece, reckons up a long liſt of illuſtrious Romans that had diſtinguiſhed themſelves as orators, for more than a century antecedent to his own time.

However, it is to be obſerved, whatever figure theſe ora-

tors made, or others that flouriſhed in a ſubſequent period, that none of their works have been preſerved; which makes it probable that they contented themſelves with temporary harangues; which they ſeldom committed to writing, and ſuffered to periſh, as ſoon as the purpoſe for which they were compoſed, was anſwered.

The ſame may be ſaid of their philoſophy, which, however it may have reſounded in the ſchools then exiſting, found none of its profeſſors ſo far capable of writing, or emulous of future fame, as to ſit down and tranſmit to poſterity the doctrines of their different ſyſtems.

Cicero alone, to vindicate the fame of his countrymen, and eſtabliſh his own, has handed down to us, now, in the loud voice of oratory, now in the graver tone of philoſophy, an ample and eternal treaſure of learning on both ſubjects. In his works we have the quinteſſence of the Grecian wiſdom enlarged and illuminated with the diffuſive light of his own genius.

In oratory, he was inferior to Demoſthenes alone, having leſs fire, vehemence, and cloſeneſs; but in all his works, there is a flowing eaſe, a modulated harmony, a purity, a clearneſs, and beauty, peculiar to himſelf; a love of virtue and learning, a fulneſs of information, and comprehenſion of ideas; delivered in a vein of elegance that is lively and animated, and uniformly ſupported in his orations, epiſtles, philoſophical diſcuſſions, and other pieces. So that it excites wonder that one man could have amaſſed ſo mueh knowledge, and digeſted it in ſuch a regular manner; one too exerciſed in the ſtorms of the ſtate, and whoſe whole life was one continued ſeries of important buſineſs, public honours, trials and misfortunes.

Simplicity of ſtyle ſeems to have been the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of the Ciceronian age. Beſides its two principal poets, Lucretius and Catullus; its hiſtorians ſhow an excellent example in this reſpect. In Cæſar's Commentaries, and Nepos's Lives, though written in the plaineſt ſtyle imaginable, there is a beautiful ſimplicity, both in the thought and ex-

preſſion that cannot fail to pleaſe a juſt taſte, upon an attentive peruſal. The manner, indeed, of theſe writings does not ſtrike at firſt; as being diveſted of that pomp of language, which other hiſtorians ſtudiouſly affect, in order to gain upon the reader.

Cornelius Nepos writes always in a brief impartial manner; his candour and ſincerity are truely valuable; and his ſtyle ſomewhat more raiſed than the other's.

But Cæſar poſſeſſes an excellence of an higher kind; he writes his own hiſtory, yet with the utmoſt modeſty; talks of himſelf in the third perſon with the greateſt indifference: praiſes nothing he does; is never bitter or ſevere againſt his enemies: A ſtrong and almoſt ſingular example of a great mind, neither admiring its own performances, nor condemning thoſe of others; but, as intent on high deſigns, and capable of ſtill greater exertions, always modeſt, grave, cool, and diſpaſſionate.

The character of Catullus is beauty, elegance, and ſimplicity: his ſubjects generally ſhort and eaſy; among theſe his imitation of Sappho, and the Epithalamium are the beſt. His poem called Atys is alſo very good; likewiſe that on the death of his brother. But the moſt valuable of the larger pieces is the Marriage of Peleus and Thetis; poſſeſſing at once excellent deſcription, pathos of ſentiment, and the moſt beautiful ſimplicity of ſtyle. The tender and affecting ſtory of Ariadne can never be too much admired. It is ſurprizing how little this poet's merit is adverted to, even by the learned of this age.

Tibullus and Propertius, the two great maſters of Roman Elegy, lived ſomewhat later; and have ſuperlative merit in this branch of poetry; emulating, if not ſurpaſſing their Grecian models, Mimnermus and Callimachus.

From the elegance of their diction, and their frequent alluſions to Roman cuſtoms and Greek antiquities, they ought to be more ſtudied than they generally are, as, beſides their poetical attractions, they inform the reader of many particulars not to be found in other authors.

Propertius, eſpecially, abounds in theſe alluſions, which, together with a more figurative ſtyle, renders him more difficult than Tibullus; which laſt, though in general leſs tender and pathetic, is more eaſy, chaſte and natural. Propertius, indeed, ſeems to have had a heart entirely compoſed of love, his reaſon yielding to its full controul; and in ſpite of affronts, diſappointments, cruelties, ſtill ſubmitting to the commands of a beautiful, wanton and imperious woman.

SECTION III.

Of the Auguſtan Period.

WE have now come to the Auguſtan age; or the golden æra of the Roman literature. As the empire had already extended itſelf to the remoteſt regions, Rome became of courſe the centre, not only of the government of the world, but, in a manner, of all the learning, arts and ſciences contained in it. The largeſt city of the world, comprehending about four millions of people, under the government of a prince that patronized learning, muſt have produced wonders in literature.

Titus Livy, the hiſtorian, ſhone at this period; a vaſt genius, and equal to the magnificence of the Roman empire. Of all writers in this department, he is endowed with the greateſt command of language, and the warmeſt, and moſt correct fancy. Hence his narration is ever entertaining, and preſents a lively picture. His ſuperſtition is not only excuſeable, but even commendable; as it proceeds from a love of religion, and throws more of intereſt into his manner.

His ſpeeches are even more eloquent than Cicero's, being animated with a grandeur and pathos, that wonderfully touch the heart, and elevate the imagination. He is at all times ſupremely elegant; yet without affectation or labour.

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His ſpeeches are even more eloquent than Cicero's, being animated with a grandeur and pathos, that wonderfully touch the heart, and elevate the imagination. He is at all times ſupremely elegant; yet without affectation or labour.

He is correct, yet ſimple; often conciſe, yet never obſcure; full, yet never redundant; in fine, from the native ſtrength of his own genius, he ſeems, like Homer, to pour out his ſentences, by a kind of inſpiration, without art, in a full, varied, and eaſy melody.

On the other hand, Curtius and Salluſt, his cotemporaries, are manneriſts in hiſtory. With leſs imagination, and real dignity, their ſtyle is more artfully pompous and deſcriptive. Salluſt is elegant and laconic. His conciſeneſs, however, produces perſpicuity and ſtrength; he abounds in reflections, and particularly excels in drawing characters. His manner has been often copied by ſucceeding writers, but moſt of all by Tacitus. Monteſquieu, of the moderns, has imitated his laconiciſm to a degree that is exceſſive, and creates obſcurity in writings that are otherwiſe invaluable.

SECTION IV.

Of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid.

TO mention Virgil and Horace, is to mention every thing great and excellent in poetry. Under them, the Epic and Lyric Muſe ſoared to heaven in bold and high ſtrains of genuine poetry; and ſeem to emulate the loftieſt flights of their Grecian predeceſſors. Though the Roman language, in harmony, eaſe, and dignity, falls below the Greek; yet, in the hands of ſuch accompliſhed bards, it acquired a new and majeſtic energy. As Virgil is deſcribed elſewhere, we ſhall here only touch upon Horace.

Horace excels all other poets in the variety of his compoſitions, and the eaſe of his manner. He is the moſt charming of elegant writers. He even trifles with grace; and, whether gay or ſerious, he is always engaging, always moral. His ſubjects concern mankind in general; and find their intereſt in every breaſt.

His moralities are frequent and various, eſpecially in his Odes; in which he imitates the conciſe and rapid manner of Pindar. His Satires abound in wit, and exhibit a natural and laughable picture of the follies and vices of the times. His Epiſtles, more particularly, diſplay his own heart and life; in which there is every thing to engage our love and eſteem.

His good ſenſe, candour, and honeſty, are eminent on all occaſions. His love of virtue and moderate pleaſure ſeem to have flowed in one channel, untainted with ill-nature, envy, or extravagance of any kind. His philoſophy, indeed, ſeems ſometimes in favour of Epicurus, but it is oftener of that kind called eclectic; that is, it picks and culls out of every philoſophy what it thinks beſt. His temper, ever ſocial and chearful, was too liberal and free, to be a bigot to any particular ſect. Hence the conſtant ſerenity of his ſtyle; unclouded with that grave and ſerious mood ſo obſervable in Virgil; and which qualified the latter for the ſublime and tender, in which the former is his inferior.

It is remarkable that he never attempted Elegy, notwithſtanding he imitates the Grecian lyriſts in every other department. It is likely his diſqualification aroſe from the above-mentioned cauſe; and it is the leſs to be regreted, as it gave his temper and genius that eaſy and diſengaged manner that fitted him for a greater variety of ſubjects: Such as the lighter and higher Ode, the familiar Epiſtle, the humorous Satire, in all which, both poetic eaſe and energy are conſpicuous; a ſmiling kind of wit predominates; the moſt familiar and natural imagery are introduced; and a ſtyle ſo happy and expreſſive is employed, that the Curioſa Felicitas of Horace, has become as it were proverbial; and deſcribes whatever is moſt elegant and graceful in compoſition.

The ſtyle of Ovid, who lived at this time, is in no degree comparable to thoſe juſt now mentioned. It is tarniſhed by a mixed kind of wit that meets the reader almoſt

every where; ſeldom or never riſes to the true ſublime; and can only at beſt be called ſmooth or beautiful. Often, however, he tells a ſtory extremely well; is chiefly valuable for his vaſt reading; and for connecting together, with wonderful art, and in one chain, all the Grecian and barbarian fables; which renders his chief work, the Metamorphoſes, ſingular in its kind, and both valuable and entertaining to after ages.

In this work his account of the Deluge, ſtory of Phæton, Pyramus and Thiſbe, Ceyx, Biblis, and the conteſt between Ajax and Ulyſſes, are among the beſt of his pieces, and the leaſt debaſed of any with the above mixture of affected wit: to which we may add his entertaining account of Pythagoras and his doctrines.

His Love-elegies; but more particularly his books, De Arte Amandi, and De Remedio Amoris, exhibit Ovid as a man of wit and imagination rather than of tenderneſs and feeling. As for his Art of Love, it teaches more the art of ſeduction and coquetry, than that of true and ſincere love. Indeed, the very idea of reducing love to an art is abſurd; real love diſdains art, and has nothing to do with it; ſtill leſs, perhaps, than any of the paſſions. It is probable that Ovid's ſoul was not tuned to this delicate paſſion; he wanted ſenſibility for it. His miſtreſſes are almoſt all fictitious ones; and it is likely that even his Julia, the emperor's daughter, had but too much of her father's vanity; and was one of thoſe unfeeling coquets, that are more pleaſed with the flattering attentions and affected airs of a beau and a coxcomb, than the ſighs of a real lover.

However the matter be as to Julia, and whatever offence he may have otherwiſe given in his management of theſe poems, certain it is, that his conſequent baniſhment by Auguſtus, to ſo remote and inhoſpitable a climate as that of Pontus and the Euxine ſea, inſpires us with pity for his ſufferings, and we cannot but think the puniſhment too ſevere for the crime; perhaps worſe than death itſelf.

For what can be deemed a more cruel and unnatural

tranſition, than the being removed, all at once, with diſgrace, from one's dear friends and acquaintance; from the court of Auguſtus, where he was honoured and reſpected, both by the emperor, and the whole tribe of wits that adorned it; torn from his dear wife and only daughter, without a friend to accompany him; perhaps without money, without books; hurried, I ſay, all at once from Rome, the capital of a vaſt empire, the centre of learning and politeneſs, and of all the pleaſures, wealth, and luxuries of the then known world; to a deſart and barbarous land; the people and language of which he was an entire ſtranger to; to linger out the remainder of his days in diſgrace, ſilence, and obſcurity, cut off from all his former pleaſures! What muſt have been his feelings! Accordingly, we find him bemoaning his fate in thoſe ten books of Epiſtles, ſix of which are compoſed of Elegies; the others go under the name of Triſtia: and here his diſtreſs and deſpair are painted in very natural and touching colours.

We muſt obſerve, too, in Ovid's praiſe, that his Heroic Epiſtles, though inferior to Propertius and Tibullus, in expreſſing the ſofter feelings of love, are, however, written with a good deal of nature; and exhibit the heart and paſſions of the ancient perſonages they deſcribe, with conſiderable juſtneſs.

SECTION V.

A General Character of the Language.

WE have now ſeen the Roman language carried to its higheſt pitch, and equally fitted for all ſubjects: like the people who ſpoke it, ſtrong, manly, bold, and majeſtic. It differs from the Greek, in being leſs harmonious and copious; but it is more conciſe, and ſometimes more forcible. It is, indeed, leſs ſuited for poetry, as wanting both the various cadence of the dialects, and the expreſſive force of

the compound epithets; and which are ſo peculiarly beautiful, eſpecially in Homer, as to exhibit, in a ſingle word, more than the fulleſt deſcription.

On the other hand, in proſe, the Latin, as it admits more of tranſpoſition, or what is called by ſome, the order of imagination, its ſtyle, though more difficult than the Greek, becomes more diverſified; hence, perhaps, it pleaſes the mind more by giving play to its activity, at the ſame time that it fills the ear with a ſufficient variety of agreeable and harmonious ſounds.

After all, the Greek, from its ſuperior melody, dignity, and ſweetneſs; its preciſion, copiouſneſs, variety of muſical dialects; and, above all, from the invention, grace, and ſingular beauty of its authors; ſtill ranks above the Latin, and far above all other languages whatever.

SECTION VI.

Lives and Characters of Eminent Roman Writers.

TERENCE:

WAS born at Carthage in Africa. He was ſlave to Terentius Lucanus the ſenator; who gave him his liberty for his wit, his good mien and great abilities. Upon obtaining his freedom, he applied himſelf to the writing of comedies, and, rejecting the old ſtage, formed himſelf upon the new one of Menander.

He was cotemporary with Lucilius the ſatyriſt, and Polybius the hiſtorian: and, along with them, enjoyed the patronage and friendſhip of Scipio and Lælius, who were then the moſt learned, and the moſt eloquent men in Rome. His comedies, no doubt, owe much of their poliſh and elegance to the correction and advice of two ſuch eminent critics.

Terence died about the 15th year before the Chriſtian æra. The humour of his plays will laſt for ages. It is

natural, and, like Addiſon's or Shakeſpeare's, exhibits what mankind are in every age in ſimilar ſituations. The language is of the pureſt kind, delicate, eaſy, and unaffected.

TIBULLUS:

A Roman knight, born at Rome 43 years B. C. He was the intimate friend of Horace, as we learn from one of his epiſtles; and Ovid compoſed a very fine elegy on his death.

His four books of Elegies were complete in their kind. Muret and Scaliger have both written learned commentaries upon them.

He appears to have been a man of polite manners, fond of the country; and endued with that kind of ſenſibility that diſpoſes to love.

Hammond has imitated him in his Elegies with remarkable exactneſs, and with ſo much nature and eaſe, that he may be reckoned an original in our language. There is a more literal verſion of him by Grainger, but much inferior in ſpirit to Hammond.

The beſt edition of his works is that of Broukhouſius, publiſhed at Amſterdam in 1708.

VIRGIL:

Juſtly ſtyled the prince of Latin Epic poetry, was the ſon of a potter, and born near Mantua, 70 years before Chriſt. He ſtudied firſt at Mantua, then at Cremona, Milan, and Naples. Going to Rome, he acquired the eſteem of the greateſt wits, and moſt illuſtrious perſons of his time; among others the Emperor Auguſtus, Mæcenas, and Pollio. He was eminent for great talents; not only in polite literature and poetry, but alſo in philoſophy, geometry, geography, medicine, and natural hiſtory.

Though one of the greateſt geniuſes of the age, and the admiration of the Romans, he always preſerved a ſingular modeſty, and lived with moderation and virtue at a time when the manners of the age were very corrupt.

He firſt turned himſelf to paſtoral; and, being charmed with the beauty and ſweetneſs of Theocritus, was ambitious of introducing this new ſpecies of poetry among the Romans. His firſt performance in this way, called Alexis, was ſuppoſed written A. R. 709, in the 25th year of his age. He wrote the other Eclogues at different intervals; moſt of them being occaſioned by the circumſtances of his life.

His Pollio, (a moſt finiſhed piece), ſeems to be rather a prophecy, than a paſtoral; and is ſo much in the ſpirit of Iſaiah's prophecies, applied to Jeſus Chriſt, that we muſt ſuppoſe that either he has ſeen that prophet's works, or elſe borrowed his ideas, which are truely divine and extraordinary, from the prophecies of the Cumean Sybil, in regard to a divine perſon who was to appear and reform the world; all which he applies, no doubt, out of compliment to young Pollio.

His Gallus is another complimentary Eclogue to his friend of that name; and is as pathetic a piece as ever was compoſed: the ideas are wholly paſtoral; and the paſſion of love is deſcribed in a manner that muſt ſtrongly affect every perſon that has ever felt it.

In his 34th year, our author retired to Naples, and began his Georgics; which he undertook at the deſire of Mæcenas, to whom he dedicates them; not to rival Heſiod as he had lately done Theocritus, but to promote agriculture, and benefit his country. To this memorable poem, and glorious performance, he is ſaid to have given ſeven years; to his Paſtorals three.

It appears, indeed, from his own expreſſions, that he wiſhed to be conſidered as the firſt who introduced both paſtoral, georgic, and epic poetry from the Grecian to the Latian plains; and it is but juſtice to ſay that he did ſo, and was a complete maſter in all; and remained unrivalled in each.

In finiſhing his Æneid he ſpent eleven years. He died at Brunduſium, of an aſthma, in the 53d year of his age.

He was of a ſwarthy complexion, tall, of a ſickly con-

ſtitution, affected with frequent headachs and ſpitting of blood. He was ſo very baſhful, that he frequently ran into the ſhops to prevent his being gazed at by the people. It is likewiſe ſaid that he was ſlovenly in his dreſs, awkward and careleſs of his perſon, and that Horace alludes to him in theſe lines:

" Iracundior eſt paulo, minus aptus acutis
" Naribus horum hominum; rideri poſſit, eo quod
" Ruſticius tonſo toga defluit, et male laxus
" In pede calceus hæret. At eſt bonus, ut melior vir
" Non alius quiſquam; at tibi amicus; at ingenium ingens
" Inculto latet hoc ſub corpore."

He was ſo benevolent and inoffenſive, that moſt of his cotemporary poets, though they envied each other, yet loved and eſteemed him. In philoſophy, he ſeems firſt to have inclined to the ſyſtem of Epicurus, after the example of Lucretius; but afterwards to have relinquiſhed it for the more comfortable and religious doctrines of Plato.

HORACE.

The moſt excellent of the Latin poets of the lyric, or ſatirical kind, and the moſt judicious critic in the Auguſtan period, was the grandſon of a freed-man, and born at Venuſium 64 years B. C. He had the beſt maſters of Rome; after which, as he himſelf tells us, he completed his education at Athens. Having taken up arms, he embraced the party of Brutus and Caſſius, (as did his friend Virgil), againſt Auguſtus. Horace left his ſhield at the battle of Philippi; and Virgil narrowly eſcaped on horſe-back. But both were pardoned and admitted to the emperor's favour, ſoon after; by the intereſt of Mæcenas.

Horace now gave himſelf up entirely to the ſtudy of polite literature and poetry. Beſides Auguſtus and Mæcenas, he was honoured with the friendſhip of Agrippa, Pollio, Varus, Lollius, the two Piſos, with all the wits and great men

of the age; as his Odes and Epiſtles teſtify. He died at the age of 57.

He was of ſhort ſtature, inclined to fatneſs, black-haired, tender-eyed, and ſomewhat paſſionate, but eaſily reconciled and pacified. Theſe are all circumſtances told by himſelf. He left Auguſtus his heir; and was buried in the pure air of the Eſquilian hill, near the tomb of Mæcenas.

JUVENAL:

Was born about the beginning of the emperor Claudian's reign, at Aquinum in Campania. According to the faſhion of the times, being bred to eloquence, he ſtudied firſt under Fronto the orator, and afterwards under Quintilian; after which he practiſed at the bar, and made a diſtinguiſhed figure for many years. By his practice, he improved his fortune before he turned his thoughts to poetry, the very ſtyle of which, in his Satires, ſpeaks a long habit of declamation.

It is ſaid he was about 40 years of age before he recited his firſt Eſſay to a ſmall audience of his friends; but meeting with great applauſe, he was encouraged to go on.

He laſhed the vices of the times, which were then great and many, with much ſeverity of ſatire, and excellent eloquence. Domitian ſent him into baniſhment for uſing too great liberties with him; but, returning to Rome after his death, he reſolved to forbear invective againſt the living, and confine himſelf to the dead. There are ſtill extant ſixteen of his Satires, all finiſhed pieces, deſcriptive in a high degree of the times, and full of excellent morality, and the true ſpirit of poetry: but ſome of them only are ſufficiently proper to be put into the hands of youth.

LIVY:

The prince of Roman hiſtorians, was born at Padua; as few circumſtances are left us of his life, (which is often the caſe with the greateſt geniuſes), we can mention only a few particulars in regard to it.

Indeed, ſo reſerved has he been, with regard to himſelf, that we ſhould be as much at a loſs to determine the time in which his hiſtory was written, were it not for one paſſage which accidentally eſcaped him. He tells us there, "that "the temple of Janus had been twice ſhut ſince the reign "of Numa; once in the conſulſhip of Manlius, after the "firſt Punic war was ended; and again, in his own times, "by Auguſtus Cæſar, after the battle of Actium."

He came to Rome very early; and it is ſaid was known to Auguſtus before, by certain philoſophical dialogues which he addreſſed to him. About this time it is ſuppoſed he began his hiſtory; but being interrupted by the tumults and diſtractions of Rome, he frequently retired to Naples in order to enjoy that tranquility which his ſtudies required; he himſelf, in his preface, complains of the manners of his age, and tells us, that "he ſhould reap this reward of his "labour in compoſing the Roman hiſtory, that it would "take his attention from the preſent numerous evils, at leaſt "while he was employed on the firſt and earlieſt ages." And it appears that he ſpent near twenty years upon this valuable hiſtory, ſince he carried it down from the foundation of Rome to beyond 740.

After the death of Auguſtus Cæſar, he returned to the place of his birth, where he was received with all imaginable honour; and there he died in the 4th year of the reign of Tiberius, aged above 70 years. Some ſay he died the ſame day with Ovid: it ſeems certain that he died the ſame year.

Scarce any man was ever more honoured, alive as well as dead, than this hiſtorian. Pliny, the younger, relates, that a gentleman travelled from Gades, in the remoteſt parts of Spain, to ſee Livy; and though Rome abounded with more ſtupendous and curious ſpectacles than any city in the world, yet immediately returned; as if, after having ſeen Livy, nothing elſe was worthy of notice.

"The encomiums," (ſay the authors of the Biographical Dictionary), "beſtowed upon Livy are great and numerous;

" both by ancients and moderns. Quintilian ſpeaks of him " in the higheſt terms, and thinks that Herodotus need not " take it ill to have Livy equalled with him: we think ſo " too; and that Livy ſhould even be preferred to him, ſince " he ſeems to us in almoſt all reſpects his ſuperior."

As I have elſewhere drawn a compariſon between Herodotus and Livy, where I have endeavoured to eſtimate their merits according to the beſt of my abilities, I ſhall add nothing further to this article.

The beſt editions abroad are that of Gronovius, cum notis variorum, et ſuis, Lugd. Bat. 1679, 3 vols. 8vo; that of Le Clerc, at Amſterdam, 1709, 10 vols. 12mo; and that of Crevier, at Paris, 1735, 6 vols. 4to. Theſe have Frienſhemius's ſupplement. There is alſo an edition publiſhed at Edinburgh, by Ruddiman, ſufficiently correct, in 4 vols. 8vo; but without the ſupplement.

CURTIUS:

Wrote the life of Alexander the Great in ten books; the two firſt of which have not come down to us, but have been ſupplied by Frienſhemius. The time in which he lived is not agreed upon among the learned, ſome placing him under Auguſtus or Tiberius; others under Veſpaſian or Trajan.

The latter account is more probable, as his ſtyle partakes of that florid manner that prevailed in the decline of the Roman language. He is elaborate and pompous; ingenious, and entertaining. He makes uſe of ſet ſpeeches like Livy and Salluſt. The tranſlation of his hiſtory into French, by Vaugelas, is one of the moſt elegant in that language.

QUINTILIAN:

Was born at Calagurris in Spain. He is ſaid to have been brought to Rome by Galba; and it is certain that he taught rhetoric in that city with great reputation.

He had ſeveral domeſtic afflictions, which had like to have overcome his conſtancy; and which made him complain of his cruel fate, in a very pathetic ſtrain.

He lamented, above all things, the death of a ſon about ten years of age, who, it ſeems, was an extraordinary promiſing child. He had before this loſt his wife; whom he likewiſe regrets much, and praiſes highly. She had left him two ſons, of whom one died in his fifth, the other in his tenth year. The latter was the eldeſt, and had uncommon talents.

Quintilian's affliction for ſo many loſſes was ſo great, that he reſolved to leave off writing; and to throw into the flames what he had already compoſed. His words are very remarkable, and deſerve tranſcription.

" Tunc igitur optimum fuit, infauſtum opus, et quicquid " hoc eſt in me infelicium literarum, ſuper immaturum " funus conſumpturis viſcera mea flammis injicere, neque " hanc impiam vivacitatem novis inſuper curis fatigare. " Quis enim mihi bonus parens ignoſcat, ſi ſtudere amplius " poſſum? ac non oderit hanc animi mei firmitatem, ſi quis " in me eſt alius uſus vocis, quam ut incuſem deos, ſuper- " ſtes omnium meorum? nullam terris deſpicere providen- " tiam teſter? Si non meo caſu, cui tamen nihil objici, niſi " quod vivam, poteſt! at illorum certe, quos utique im- " meritos mors acerba damnavit.—Juro per mala mea, per " infelicem conſcienciam, per illos manes numina doloris " mei, has me in illo vidiſſe virtutes ingenii, non modo ad " perſpiciendas diſciplinas, quo nihil præſtantius cognovi, " plurima expertus, ſtudiique jam tum non coacti, (ſciunt " preceptores), ſed probitatis, pietatis, liberalitatis; ut pror- " ſus poſſit hinc eſſe tanti fulminis metus! quod obſervatum " fere eſt, celerius occidere feſtinatam maturitatem; et eſſe, " neſcio quam, quæ ſpes tantas decerpat, invidiam; ne vi- " delicet ultra quam homini datum eſt, noſtra provehan- " tur!"

Quintilian was accounted ſo good an advocate, that ſome perſons wrote down his pleadings to ſell them to the book-

ſellers. He appears, by his works, to have been an honeſt man; and there is, beſides variety of learning, a great deal of morality in him. His Declamations are his worſt performances. His Inſtitutiones Oratoriæ is an excellent and valuable work, and ought to be read and ſtudied by every one who pretends to be either a good critic or author. His ſtyle is elegant, lively, and animated. He had a fine taſte and judgment, as well as an excellent heart.

TACITUS:

The moſt philoſophic of Roman hiſtorians, flouriſhed under the emperors Veſpaſian, Titus, and Domitian; of whom the two former gave him conſiderable employments, while under the latter he enjoyed the honour of being made both prætor and conſul.

But theſe dignities gave him but little glory compared to his writings. There are ſtill extant; five books of his hiſtory; his annals; his treatiſe on the different German nations; and his life of J. Agricola. The treatiſe on Eloquence, aſcribed to him, is more generally allowed to be Quintilian's; indeed the ſtyle bears evident marks of it.

Tacitus's character, as a writer, is conciſeneſs and force. He abounds in ſentiment, traces the moſt ſecret ſprings of action, penetrates the cabinet of princes, brings you preſent to ſenates and councils; and all this in ſo lively and intereſting a manner, that you think yourſelf preſent at every thing done or ſaid. He excels in deſcription; but I reſerve diſcuſſing his character more fully till a further occaſion.

Pliny the younger, who was his friend, gives his works the higheſt praiſe.

THE TWO PLINIES:

Pliny, the elder, was born at Verona, and lived towards the end of the firſt century under Veſpaſian and Titus. He may be ſaid to be the firſt and laſt of the Romans that wrote with ability on natural hiſtory. This great work conſiſts of thirty-ſeven books replete with erudition, and containing a

vaſt variety of articles: Stars, planets, hail, winds, rain; trees, plants, flowers; metals, minerals; animals of every kind, terreſtrial, aquatic, volatile; geographical deſcriptions of countries, cities; liberal arts and ſciences. To compoſe this work he peruſed about 2000 volumes.

His life, temper and manners, are well drawn by his nephew. He was remarkable for his amazing induſtry in diſcharging his duty in public affairs, and dedicating all his leiſure hours to reading and ſtudy. Even at his meals he had conſtantly ſome body to read to him; and in travelling had his books, tablets, and copiſts by his ſide; he was always either making obſervations from what he ſaw, or extracts from what he read.

He was a wonderful admirer of Livy, and was even employed reading him during that eruption of mount Veſuvius that proved fatal to him; and which is deſcribed by his nephew in ſuch lively colours.

The ſtyle of Pliny has ſomething peculiar. It has force and energy, and often flows harmoniouſly; it has alſo vivacity, and paints, in a very animated manner, the different objects it deſcribes, ſo as to make them entertaining and agreeable. Yet it partakes of that affected elegance that ſo much prevailed towards the decline of the Roman language; it affects conceit and prettineſs; launches out into falſe thoughts, which it covers with a ſwelling expreſſion; and in this way becomes often unnatural, and not ſeldom obſcure.

Pliny, the younger, ſeems to have been of much the ſame turn and temper with his uncle. Active in buſineſs at the ſtated hours, he affected to amuſe all his leiſure time with literature and writing. He was, indeed, both an accompliſhed ſcholar and gentleman, and poſſeſt, on the whole, of a good heart; but, to an obſerving reader, there is diſcoverable in him, a vanity and oſtentation, which, perhaps, was concealed even from himſelf; and which is ſeen, not only in the diſplay he gives of his literary acquirements,

but even of his virtues, which ſeem to have been great and many.

His ſtyle is more exact, and more uniformly elaborate than that of his uncle; and his Letters, although not written with Ciceronian eaſe and purity, are, notwithſtanding, very elegant, and have much force and vivacity of diction, containing that agreeable variety of ſubjects to which letter-writing is adapted, and which renders it ſo entertaining. They are well tranſlated by Melmoth.

SECTION VII.

Of the Decline of Literature, and Fall of the Roman Empire.

ABOUT the time of the Emperors Veſpaſian and Trajan, the Roman language ſeems ſtill to have retained a conſiderable degree of force and elegance; debaſed, however, not a little from the native ſimplicity and purity of the Auguſtan age.

Of memorable writers of this period we have already mentioned Pliny the elder and younger; with the eloquent and philoſophical Tacitus; to whom we may add Florus the conciſe and witty hiſtorian; the candid memoir-writer Sueton, and the acute and judicious Paterculus.

The Greek philoſophy and language, much about the ſame period, flouriſhed in an equal degree. Then lived Longinus, the celebrated critic; and Diogenes Laertius, that eminent biographer. Arrian and Joſephus both write their hiſtories in pure Greek.

Lucian, who flouriſhed in the beginning of the ſecond century, exhibits great eloquence, as well as genuine humour in his Dialogues and true Hiſtory. He is, perhaps, in this walk of ſatire, the moſt entertaining of all ancient or modern authors; poſſeſſing at once a lively imagination, a

correct judgment, and the utmoſt command of language.

Epictetus is both elegant and conciſe; and the moſt pleaſant of all the ſtoic tribe. Plutarch, though not remarkable for his ſtyle, (which is of the mixed kind), is eminently eſtimable for the boundleſs variety and utility of his matter.

Juſtin, Appian, Dion Caſſius, and Herodian, cloſe the liſt of theſe changeful times; and are among thoſe few that give us any tolerable account of them.

Thus the ſun of literature gave one bright gleam before its ſetting; and then diſappeared. A thick and dark night of ignorance gradually ſucceeded. The ſeeds of corruption in the empire ſtill prevailed to haſten its downfal; and though now and then a ſuperior emperor, ſuch as Aurelian and Conſtantine, might retard, they did not effectually prevent its approaching diſſolution.

I ſhall, therefore, paſs over the ſucceeding period as equally barren of literature and virtue; and only briefly touch on that memorable cataſtrophe, when the Goths and Vandals, and other northern nations, poured in, like a torrent, upon the empire; ravaging the country, deſtroying the towns, and burying nations, arts, and ſciences in one common ruin.

That a barbarous people, coming from the north, ſhould at once overthrow an empire of ſuch duration and renown as that of Rome, is at firſt view ſurpriſing; and indeed various cauſes muſt have concurred to bring about ſo remarkable an event. But as every thing human is variable, and ſubject to change; ſo it was neceſſary that the empire of Rome ſhould ceaſe to exiſt at a period when thoſe cauſes ceaſed to operate, that alone could ſupport its exiſtence.

It had loſt its liberty, its virtue, and its martial ſpirit. That love of their country, which, like a ſacred flame, ſpread from boſom to boſom, through a long ſucceſſion of generous patriots, and contributed, with ambition, to raiſe

their dominion to an enormous height; had long ago begun to languiſh, and was now totally extinguiſhed.

The ruin of Carthage; the want of a rival to diſpute the palm of military glory; and their taſte for the luxuries of Aſia upon the conqueſt of Antiochus; brought on the firſt ſymptoms of their ſure, though diſtant deſtruction.

As the balance of government inclined rather to the people, againſt whom the ſenate was not a ſufficient counterpoiſe, it became the object of ambitious men to court the favour of the former by arts of eloquence and bribery, in order to gain the ſummit of power to which they aſpired. Theſe men being poſſeſt of great abilities, practiſed in war and entruſted with armies, employed thoſe advantages, to the ſubverſion of that liberty, which in honour and duty they were bound to defend, till the ſenate, loſing all its authority, and all the noble and beſt families of Rome being waſted and intimidated by perpetual proſcriptions; anarchy prevailed, and demagogues and tyrants ruled the empire.

The removal of the imperial ſeat to Conſtantinople; and the effeminacy cruelty and barbarity of moſt of the ſucceeding emperors, all contributed to the ſame effect.

No wonder, then, that a brave and free people, however unpoliſhed in arts and arms, ſhould overturn an empire already tottering by its own weight, and half-expiring by wounds of its own infliction. Theſe barbarians, were, moreover, exceedingly numerous; and ruſhed, in ſucceſſive ſwarms, from the frozen regions of the north, to attack a country weak indeed, yet rich, and abounding with luxuries of every kind.

They were, beſides, actuated by a ſpirit of heroiſm peculiar to themſelves; and which ſeemed to be inſpired into them by their firſt founders and leaders, whom they worſhipped as gods, and who had taught them peculiar doctrines.

That ſpecies of poetry which they ſung, upon going to battle, muſt have breathed an uncommon ſpirit of romanti c

enthuſiaſm; ſince, according to Tacitus, in his account of the Germans, it inflamed their imaginations in ſuch a degree, as to make them gueſs the fortune of the day, by the ſtrain in which it was ſung.

Sir William Temple tells us, in his excellent Eſſays, that the immortal Getæ, as they were commonly ſtyled, and from whom moſt of the northern nations were deſcended; had high notions in regard to a future ſtate; and taught their people to believe, that thoſe that fell in battle, would go immediately to Zamolxis, their great hero and lawgiver. This account he derives from as ancient an hiſtorian as Herodotus.

Their deſcendants, the Goths, adopted the ſame opinion; but choſe for Zamolxis another great prince or chief of their own, called Odin, Woden, or Goden, according to the different northern dialects. This belief, along with that free and martial ſpirit peculiar to their religion and government; animated them to perform wonders. Human nature, in them, having its free ſcope; and further aided by a peculiar object of imagination, it is no wonder they overran the Roman empire with ſuch numbers and force, and filled all Europe with deſolation and conqueſt.

All human affairs, as well as learning, underwent a new and uncommon change by this revolution.

PART IV.

Italian Literature.

SECTION I.

Of the Revival of Learning in Italy; and of the Italian Poetry.

WHILE the Goths, Vandals, Lombards, and Saxons were thus ravaging the Roman empire, and during the fifth and ſixth centuries had already ſeized on all the weſtern parts, from Britain and the banks of the Elbe, to Spain and the utmoſt parts of Italy; a new empire had already founded itſelf in the deſarts of Arabia, and, under the auſpices of Mahomet and his ſucceſſors, who were at once great as warriors, prophets, and legiſlators, ſpread by degrees through Perſia and India, and to the weſt, through Egypt and Lybia; till at laſt, in the ſeventh century, from Africa theſe Sarazens paſſed into Spain (which had already been invaded by the Goths), and, under the name of Moors, there founded the kingdom of Cordova.

About the ſame time, Charlemain king of France, and ſucceſſor to Pepin, extended his dominion over Italy, and eſtabliſhed the empire of Lombardy on the ruins of that of Rome, while the eaſtern, or Grecian empire daily languiſhed, and haſtened to deſtruction.

During theſe tumults and confuſions, the arts and ſciences over all Europe ſeemed to have ſuffered a total eclipſe; and for near the ſpace of a thouſand years, to wit, from the

firſt invaſion of the Goths and Vandals, till the fifteenth century, lay buried in more than Cimmerian darkneſs.

Indeed, in the eaſt, the empire of the Sarazens ſeems to have paid ſome regard to the intereſts of learning, at leaſt to that kind of it invented and practiſed by the Arabians. Algebra, phyſic, chemiſtry, and judicial aſtrology, were encouraged at the court of the caliphs of Bagdat. The Sarazens, with their conqueſts, carried theſe into Europe; which, along with the yet remaining monuments of the polite arts at Conſtantinople, ſerved as fuel to revive the decayed flame of learning.

Long, however, were theſe ſparks kept under, by the diſtractions of the Greek empire; the irruptions of barbarians in the weſt; the ſtruggle of the Chriſtians againſt the Turks for the Holy land; and, above all, from the abſurd, though politic ſuperſtition and tyranny of the Roman Pontiffs; who, in order to eſtabliſh on the firmeſt baſis their own temporal power, held all Europe in a bondage of the groſſeſt ignorance.

The Reformation begun by Luther and Calvin, the invention of printing and the mariner's compaſs, with the conſequent diſcoveries of America and a new paſſage to India; gradually civilized and enlightened mankind, by a more free communication of arts, knowledge, commerce, and religion.

The nature of the feudal government ſtrongly biaſſed in favour of liberty; the eſtabliſhment of freedom in towns; the gallant regard paid to women, along with the practice of chivalry and the duel; all tended to the civilization of manners, and to mitigate that ferocity and barbarity that diſgraced the dark or Gothic ages.

About this time a new race of writers ſtarted up, and a new world of literature opened to view, different in kind, indeed, from that of the Greeks and Romans; yet marked with genius, and gradually riſing to dignity and importance. Even thoſe regions that in the time of the elegant ancients, could produce nothing but barbarity or ſavage

valour, now gave birth to ſciences and arts, and enjoyed, in their turn, the ſplendid ſunſhine of knowledge and refinement.

Britain, Germany, France, and Spain, climates hitherto inhoſpitable to literature; and that from time immemorial brought forth nations only agitated with diſcord, ſunk in ignorance, or torpid with ſloth; at laſt awakened from their long dream, and threw off thoſe chains that ſeemed both their diſgrace and miſery. Europe aſſumed a new face; in it mankind began to feel their natural powers; and nations the moſt ſavage and unpoliſhed ſhared more or leſs in the general reformation.

Italy, however, was the firſt that figured in this reſtoration of learning; and produced ſuch examples of genius in the fine arts, as left not much to be improved upon, even by the moſt eminent of their ſucceſſors.

It is worth while to obſerve, that this was chiefly owing to the Troubadours or Provençal poets; who, about the time of the Cruſades, attended the courts of the different European princes, and were greatly admired for the ſmoothneſs of their language and their talents in poetic compoſition.

But no where, were they more careſſed and encouraged than in Italy. Romantic love and feats of chivalry chiefly employed their ſongs, and were deſcribed with all that enthuſiaſm for which the times were ſo remarkable. They, likewiſe, dealt in ſatire and morals, and were particularly ſevere againſt the clergy, the diſſoluteneſs of whoſe lives, in thoſe days, was ſhockingly notorious.

The Italians inſenſibly caught their manner, and applying it to their own tongue, (which grew every day more refined), they at laſt ſupplanted that of the Provençals, whoſe language as well as poetry, after laſting for two or three centuries, fell into diſuſe, and in the fourteenth century entirely diſappeared.

However, to this ſet of ſtrolling bards was owing that remarkable revolution in literature that took place ſooner

or later in the different kingdoms of Europe. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccace, in Italy; Chaucer and Spenſer, in England, as well as other poets in France and Spain; all formed themſelves upon the provençal poetry; choſe much the ſame ſubjects, and breathed a ſpirit of wild romance and humour, extremely characteriſtic of the times.

Even the wild graces of Dante; as well as the delicacy and tenderneſs of Petrarch, gave new charms to the language of Italy. Boccace, by the humour of his tales, and elegance of his diction, enhanced the merit of its proſe; ſo that in the hands of ſuch able reformers, it may be ſaid to have acquired its firſt form and ſtability; and certainly poſſeſſed more purity and natural beauties than in any future period of its cultivation.

In regard to Dante, although I have ſaid that his graces are wild, I mean it as to his ſentiment, and the wildneſs of his imagination; not his ſtyle, which is remarkably chaſte and pure, conſidering that he was the father of Italian poetry, and the firſt writer of any eminence in that language. His imagination, naturally ſerious and ſublime, had imbibed the romantic enthuſiaſm of the times; but his ſtyle has all the elegance and harmony of Virgil.

The æra of Pope Leo the Xth, early in the ſixteenth century, was a glorious one for Italian literature and taſte. Leo himſelf was a polite ſcholar, and an encourager of arts and elegant learning. Cardinal Bembo, who had been his ſecretary, was a good poet both in Italian and Latin; though ſome of his poems have been cenſured for their looſeneſs.

Polite arts of every kind now raiſed their heads; hiſtory, poetry, painting, ſculpture, muſic.—Then lived Guicciardini the famous hiſtorian; the firſt of any note who wrote the hiſtory of Italy in her own language. His hiſtory is greatly eſteemed; and was continued by John Baptiſt Adriani, his friend.

Davila, who was born in the iſland of Cyprus, but afterwards ſettled in Italy, and wrote his admirable hiſtory

of the civil wars of France; ſucceeded Guicciardini in the hiſtorical walk.

Then, likewiſe, flouriſhed Taſſo and Arioſto, the two moſt celebrated of the Italian poets; the latter of whom, to great ſimplicity of ſtyle, joins amazing invention and variety; but in my opinion, muſt yield to the other, who has, likewiſe, abundance of variety, but more epic art and order, more dignity of ſound and diction; and far more intereſt and pathos in his manner.

What chiefly characterizes the poets of theſe times, is a ſpirit of romance, enchantment, and demoniſm; which, joined to a diverſity of verſe, ſtrongly diſcriminates them from the Greek and Roman writers of former days. Yet the mythology of the northern nations, however wild and extravagant in ſome inſtances, carries in it a grandeur extremely ſuitable to poetry, and that raiſes the modern bards to a ſublimity which even rivals the ancients.

Their rhymes were of Gothic origin, and peculiarly ſuited their language. Romantic love and chivalry aroſe from the ſame ſource. All of theſe ſtrongly actuated and modelled their compoſitions; gave a new and freſh ſpirit to modern verſe; filled it with a high and peculiar kind of enthuſiaſm; and produced impreſſions upon the human mind, very different indeed, yet not leſs elevated; and perhaps, as pathetic and important, as thoſe occaſioned by reading the beſt writers of more ancient times.

Rhyme, therefore, being of Gothic origin, eaſily adapts itſelf to moſt modern languages, whoſe baſis or ſuperſtructure is more or leſs Gothic. It is peculiarly ſweet in the Italian, whoſe characteriſtic is melody; and which, moreover, excels all others, (if we except the Engliſh), in the richneſs and variety of its harmonies. Sweetneſs and variety belong to the Italian, majeſty and force to the Engliſh, joined to an extent and ſtrength of harmony peculiar to itſelf.

Yet, though I have ſaid that rhyme has particular beauty in modern tongues, I do not mean that it excludes the uſe

of blank verſe in the Greek and Latin form. In Engliſh, in particular, this has great force and beauty; and I believe ſuits beſt works of majeſty and importance. Our own Milton may be brought as a diſtinguiſhed inſtance that the ancient verſe is not at all unſuitable to modern poetry; however the Gothic or Runic rhymes have introduced the contrary cuſtom.

Even harſh, as the Dutch language is generally deemed to be, yet ſome of its poetical compoſitions, are allowed, by thoſe who underſtand ſufficiently the Teutonic dialect, to be written in a very ſweet and agreeable, and ſometimes a lofty ſtyle. And there has been publiſhed in Dutch a very good tranſlation of Milton's Paradiſe Loſt, in blank verſe.

I have ſaid that the Italian tongue excels in ſweetneſs and variety: but I mean this only in regard to its verſe; which, by means of abbreviation, and other changes, poſſeſſes a different kind of dialect from its proſe. On the other hand, this laſt, from the identity and length of its muſical terminations, eſpecially in the verb, cloys the ear by too great ſameneſs, and is not near ſo agreeable, in point of variety or ſtrength, as the former.

By reading a few pages in Machiavel, Bentivoglio, Algarotti, or any other of the beſt proſe-writers, however excellent their ſtyle may be in other reſpects, this defect, under which it labours, will be very perceptible; and diſguſts one with its drawling languor and uniformity on every ſort of ſubject; as the French verſe does with its rapid levity, on ſubjects the moſt ſolemn and dignified.

Upon the whole, we may ſafely conclude, that the Italian tongue, from the very genius of the people, which is muſical, is more poliſhed, in point of melody, than any other; that, though its proſe labours under ſome defects, its poetic diction is far above the French, Spaniſh, or Portugueſe; that it excels theſe in force and cloſeneſs, as well as harmony; and that it only yields in all theſe reſpects to our own language, which, of all modern tongues, I am bold to declare my opinion, not only poſſeſſes the divine charms of

poetry in higher perfection; but is endowed, even in proſe, with ſuperior ſtrength and dignity. Copious, forcible, and expreſſive; it will be found, in able hands, to ſuit either the majeſty of hiſtory, the pathos of oratory, or the ſerious air of moral philoſophy.

SECTION II.

Lives and Characters of Eminent Italian Poets.

DANTE:

WAS born at Florence, May 27, 1265; Falling in love very early, he firſt wrote on tender and amorous ſubjects; but afterwards dedicated his muſe to more ſublime employments. His chief work, the Comedia Divina; divided into three parts, viz. l' Inferno, il Purgatorio, and il Paradiſo; is ſingular in its kind, both as to plan and ſentiment, which are ſublimely wild and romantic; often ſatirical and ſevere; but the diction and harmony, all along, extremely claſſical, nervous, and poetical.

As to his ſtyle, he ſeems to have had Virgil conſtantly in his eye; and to have made him his pattern. In the Inferno, he thus addreſſes his favourite Poet:

" Or ſé quel Virgilio, e quella fonte
" Che ſpande de parlar ſi largo fiume!
" Riſpoſi lui con vergognoſa fronte.
" Oh degli altri poeti onore e lume,
" Vagliami 'l lungo ſtudio, él grande amore,
" Che m' han fatto cercar lo tuo volume!
" Tu ſé lo mio maeſtro, e'l mio autore:
" Tu ſé ſolo colui, da cu' io tolſi
" Lo bello ſtile, che m' ha fatto onore."

He ſeems to have been a perſon of a very ſerious and grave deportment, and of a temper ſimilar; which his

countenance indeed indicates, from the prints we have of him. His many public employments evince him a man of addreſs and knowledge of the world. Upon the whole, he was one of the moſt conſiderable men of his time, whether we conſider him as a poliſher of the language in which he wrote; or introducing to it beauties unknown before. Petrarch, who was his ſcholar, teſtifies this of him; and his own works bear ample proof of it. It is, indeed, ſomewhat remarkable, that, in every language, the firſt writers are almoſt always the beſt; both in point of language and genius.

Dante died at Ravenna, July 1321. Being a political writer, and taking part in the factions of the times, he was baniſhed. To theſe factions he often alludes in his poems; but in ſo obſcure a manner, that his alluſions cannot be underſtood but by thoſe who know exactly the hiſtory of the times. The Guelfs and Ghibellins then divided and diſtracted Italy.

PETRARCH:

Was born at Arezzo, 1304. Next to Dante, he was the father of Italian poetry; being among the firſt of any eminence after the age of the Troubadours.

He compoſed verſes while very young; and his father deſigning him for the law, threw all his books into the fire, except Virgil and Cicero. His father and mother dying of the plague at Avignon, he returned to that city; and, having ſettled his domeſtic affairs, purchaſed in that neighbourhood a country-houſe, in a ſolitary and romantic ſituation, called Vaucluſe. Here he firſt knew the beautiful Laura, with whom he fell in love; and whom he has immortalized in his poems.

To divert his melancholy, (for the lady ſometimes encouraged, and ſometimes rejected his love), he travelled into France, the Netherlands, and Germany; and, at his return to Avignon, he entered into the ſervice of Pope John the XXII. Expecting advancement, and meeting with diſ-

appointment, he retired from court, and dedicated his whole time to poetry. His fame was ſo great, that, in one and the ſame day, he received letters from Rome and the univerſity of Paris; inviting him to receive the poetic crown. Preferring Rome to Paris, he received that crown from the ſenate and people, in the month of April, 1341.

His love of ſolitude induced his return to Vaucluſe; but, after the death of Laura, Provence became inſupportable to him, and he returned to Italy, 1352. All the princes and great men of his time, gave him marks of their eſteem. He died at Arequa, 1374. His works have been printed in 4 vols folio.

His perſon was handſome, and his temper both amorous and devout. His paſſion for Laura was of the pureſt and moſt delicate kind; as may be ſeen from his Sonnets, which ſhow uncommon delicacy and chaſtity of ſentiment, as well as of poetry: Perhaps, as poetic ſtrains of pure romantic love, they are not to be equalled in any language.

BOCCACE:

Was born in Tuſcany, 1313. He was firſt placed to a merchant; but, giving marks of genius, he was afterwards put to the law: this ſtudy he likewiſe neglected, and dreamed of nothing but poetry. He came under the inſtruction of Petrarch; and, as he was in neceſſitous circumſtances, the former generouſly ſupplied him with money, as well as books. Boccace was a great admirer of the Greek language.

His great application to ſtudy brought on him an indiſpoſition, of which he died, 1376. He wrote ſeveral books; ſome learned and ſerious; others witty and humorous. His chief work is his Decameron, written in the pureſt and moſt elegant ſtyle. Its character is humour and waggiſh gallantry; much in Chaucer's manner. Petrarch was ſo fond of it, that he was at the pains to tranſlate it into Latin for his own amuſement.

ARIOSTO:

Was born at Reggio in Lombardy, 1474. Like Boccace and Petrarch, he quitted the law for more pleaſing ſtudies. Early in life, on account of his good parts, he was taken into the ſervice of Don Hippolito, Cardinal of Eſtè. Before this, his poetic vein had ſhowed itſelf in ſeveral ſonnets and comic pieces, ſome of which he had compoſed even in his boyiſh years. He was reſolved to make a poem; and choſe Boyardo's Orlando Inamorato for a ground-work.

His Orlando was written by ſtarts; but with great perſeverance, and amidſt various interruptions, from misfortunes and difficulties.

Several princes and church-men made him large offers, if he would enter into their ſervice; but, preferring liberty to a dependent rank, he declined them all, particularly that of Leo X; notwithſtanding he received conſiderable gifts.

The duke of Ferrara delighted ſo much in his comedies, of which he wrote five, that he built a ſtage on purpoſe that he might have them played in his caſtle; and enabled our poet to build a houſe in Ferrara, with a pleaſant garden, where he uſed to compoſe his poems. It was but a ſmall, though convenient houſe. Being aſked why he did not build it in a more magnificent manner, ſince he had given ſuch noble deſcriptions of ſumptuous palaces, porticos, and fountains, in his Orlando Furioſo: he replied, that words were cheaper laid together than ſtones.

In his diet he was temperate, and careleſs of all dainties. He was of an amorous diſpoſition, and left two natural ſons; whether he was ever married, is uncertain.

In his perſon he was tall, of a melancholy complexion; and a conſtitution ſo weakly, that he had recourſe to phyſicians the greateſt part of his life. He died with great compoſure at Ferrara, July 8, 1533, being then 59 years of age. His portrait was finely drawn by Titian.

The chief merit of his Orlando, is the wildneſs of its invention; the mixture of ſerious and comic it contains; and the variety of new and excellent ſcenery with which it

abounds. Its turn is generally ſolemn and ſublime; but humour and ſatire often relieve the ſerious parts, like a gleam of ſunſhine, darting through the awful gloom of a ſtorm.

Its characters, likewiſe, are various, and well ſupported; and its deſcriptions ſtriking and animated: of the former, I inſtance Orlando, Alcina, Mandricardo, Rhodomonte; of the latter, the ſiege of Paris, the Storm, the Cave of Sleep, &c. in all of which there are the genuine ſtrokes of a maſterly and original genius.

Along with Dante's Comedia Divina, and Taſſo's Geruſalemme Liberata, the Orlando is the firſt poem in the Italian tongue: it is different from both theſe poems, as it has neither a religious plan like the former, nor an epic one like the latter: its plan is wild and irregular, or rather it has no plan at all: yet it abounds in morals and moſt uſeful ſatire.

Although the colours of Arioſto's deſcriptions differ from thoſe of Taſſo, in being leſs warm and glowing; yet his imagination ſeems equally great and fertile, even when he attempts ſublime ſubjects, to which he always does juſtice: at the ſame time we ſee his eye, amidſt its moſt awful and ſerious emotions, gliſtening every now and then with a ſly ſmile of humour, in which he indulges himſelf amidſt deſcriptions the moſt ſolemn.

Upon the whole, his Orlando, compared to the Geruſalemme, is rather an amuſing than elevating poem; and as its language is eaſy and natural, and diveſted of every thing like pomp or ſplendour; it thence recommends itſelf to thoſe diſpoſitions that are more pleaſed with the agreeable or entertaining than the pompous or ſublime.

To the admirers of wonderful tales and novels, it is peculiarly adapted, and far preferable to all the romances in the world; its abrupt tranſitions, in this view, are even an advantage to the reader; while the beauty of its language and harmony affords a ſource of perpetual pleaſure.

TASSO:

Was deſcended of the illuſtrious houſe of the Torregiani, lords of Bergamo, Milan, and ſeveral other towns in Lombardy. The eſtate of Bernardo, the father of our poet, was noways equal to his birth; but the deficiency of fortune was in ſome meaſure compenſated by the gifts of underſtanding. His works in verſe and proſe are recorded as monuments of his genius.

His ſon Torquato was born, March 11, 1544, at Sorrento. It is ſaid of him, when a child, that he ſeldom laughed or cried; that he ſpoke diſtinctly when ſix months old; that there was nothing childiſh in his words, but the tone of his voice; and that he even gave tokens of that equality of temper which ſupported him ſo well in his future misfortunes.

At three years of age young Taſſo began to ſtudy grammar. At four, he was ſent to the college of the Jeſuits, where he made ſo rapid a progreſs, that, at ſeven, he became a proficient in the Latin and Greek tongues. At the ſame age he made orations, and compoſed ſmall pieces of poetry; the ſtyle of which reliſhed nothing of puerility. The following lines he addreſſed to his mother when he left Naples to follow his father's fortune; being then only nine years of age.

" Ma dal ſen de la madrè empia fortuna
" Pargoletto divelſe; ah dì què bacci
" Ch' ella bagnò di lagrime dolenti
" Con ſoſpir mi remembra, e degli ardenti
" Preghi chi ſen portar l' aure fugaci,
" Ch'i' non dovea gunger piu volto a volto,
" Fra quelle braccia accolto,
" Con nodi così ſtretti, e ſi tenaci,
" Laſſo, e ſeguii con mal ſicure piante
" Qual Aſcanio, o Camilla il padre errante."

He was ſoon after ſent to the univerſity of Padua, where he completed his ſtudies in languages and philoſophy, at twelve years of age. At eighteen, he publiſhed his

poem Rinaldo; compoſed in ten months, and printed at Venice, 1562.

Meanwhile, his father intending him for the law, ſaw with regret his ſon's enthuſiaſm for philoſophy and the muſes, and accordingly went to Padua on purpoſe to reprimand him. Though he ſpoke with great vehemence and harſhneſs; Torquato heard him without interruption, and his compoſure contributed to increaſe his father's diſpleaſure. "Tell me, (ſaid Bernardo), of what uſe is that vain phi-"loſophy, upon which you pride yourſelf?" "It has ena-"bled me, (ſaid Taſſo modeſtly), to endure the harſhneſs "of your reproofs."

The name of Taſſo was now famous over all Europe: And the careſſes he received from Charles V, in a journey he made to France with Cardinal Luigi, then legate from the Pope; ſhow that his reputation was not confined to his own country.

The Cardinal's legation being concluded, Taſſo returned to Ferrara, where he applied himſelf to finiſh the Geruſalemme; and, in the mean time, publiſhed his Aminta, a paſtoral comedy, which was received with univerſal applauſe. This performance is a maſter-piece of its kind; and is the original of the Paſtor Fido, and Filli di Sciro. It is more ſimple and natural than either of them, and far more delicate and tender. In all of them, however, there is too much extravagance and improbability in the ſtory; and too great a mixture of heathen mythology to correſpond with modern manners.

The great work of Geruſalemme Liberata, he dedicated to the glory of the houſe of Eſtè. Alphonſo, Duke of Ferrara, his great patron, enjoyed that honour. The ſucceſs of the work was prodigious: It was tranſlated into Latin, French, Spaniſh, and even the Oriental languages, almoſt as ſoon as it appeared.

It abounds in every poetic beauty. And, as an epic poem, may be juſtly eſteemed the third of the kind next to Homer and Milton. In variety of character, and incident it reſembles the Iliad, though ſtill inferior; it is ſometimes

as ſublime, and often more touching and tender. Its love-ſcenes, intermixed with war, and the moſt enchanting deſcriptions of every ſort; its ſtrength, harmony, and ſplendor of diction, with its various and wonderful machinery, both of a religious and magical kind; all conſpire to render it one of the moſt intereſting and amuſing poems in the world. Compared to Taſſo, the Luſiad of Camoens, which preceded him, has much leſs variety; and, in the manner of Lucan's Pharſalia, being obliged to keep more to facts, has, like the latter poem, ſomewhat the air of a hiſtory; although, as being the firſt epic poem in point of time, during the middle ages, it has very great merit; excelling both in purity of language, and dignity of ſentiment. I have read it with high ſenſations of pleaſure.

Virgil, I look upon as inferior to Taſſo, only in point of invention; which being the principal excellence of a poet, on that account, I ſet him in the fourth place. As for Lucan, notwithſtanding his fine ſentiments, and many excellent paſſages; he is far inferior to Virgil in every reſpect; and his ſtyle partakes too much of bombaſt to entitle him to rank among the claſſic poets.

Taſſo, during his lifetime, was twice confined to priſon; and that for a length of years. The reaſons of this confinement remain unknown. He bore all with the greateſt firmneſs: yet he once fell into melancholy; and was thought delirious. At laſt, however, he recovered his freedom and ſpirits; and was ſo much in favour, that he was invited to Rome by Cardinal Cynthio, in order to be crowned with laurel in the Capitol. Thither he repaired in 1595; and the greateſt preparations were made for the ſolemnity, which Taſſo himſelf foretold would be in vain. He was already ſeized with his laſt ſickneſs, though he had only completed his 51ſt year; his ſtudies and misfortunes having brought on a premature old age.

On his death-bed, like Virgil, he requeſted his principal work (Geruſalemme) might be burned, as being imperfect. He expired in great compoſure, on the 25th of April:

Taſſo was tall and well-ſhaped, his complexion fair, but pale by ſickneſs and ſtudy; his hair of a cheſnut-brown; his fore-head ſquare and high, the fore-part bald; his eye-brows dark; and his eyes full, piercing, and of a clear blue. His voice was ſtrong, clear, and ſolemn; he ſpoke ſlowly, and generally reiterated his laſt words; he ſeldom laughed, and never to exceſs. It is ſaid of him, that never was a ſcholar more humble, a wit more devout, or a man more amiable.

METASTASIO AND GOLDONI:

Theſe are later writers; neither do I rank them on a footing with thoſe eminent Italian claſſics I have already mentioned.

Metaſtaſio's Operas have been much admired, and tranſlated into moſt languages in Europe; and acted almoſt on every ſtage. His pieces, in general, muſt be allowed to be harmonious and elegant; often-times tender; always abundantly moral: but, with all his dramatic powers, he is too affected to have the reputation of a claſſical writer; he ſeems more attentive to the poſition or ſound of his words, than the force or nature of his thoughts; he is deſcriptive rather than pathetic; and, like the French writers, more declamatory than natural.

He has endeavoured, but improperly, to turn pieces of ſcripture into poetry; and adapt them, in the way of dialogue, for ſtage-repreſentation. But this ſeems rather an unnatural, as well as impious endeavour; or, at leaſt, degrades the ſubject it pretends to embelliſh. Some late German writers have erred in the ſame way.

As for Goldoni, and ſome other of their comic writers, I have read but little of them to form a proper judgment; but, from what I have read, I can ſee that they poſſeſs a good deal of ſpirit and humour; and that the Italian language is well ſuited to this kind of writing: but, if I am not miſtaken, I obſerve ſome ſtrokes of humour not ſo delicate and chaſte as could be wiſhed.

PART V.

Portugueſe and Spaniſh Literature.

SECTION I.

Of the different Writers; and Genius of their Language.

THE Portugueſe had long been famous as poets, even as far back as the twelfth century; under Alphonſo their firſt king. The Provençals ſtirred up this ſpirit among them, as they had done in other kingdoms of Europe; and many of their moſt gallant princes ſeem to have made it their glory to touch the lyre, as well as to wield the truncheon.

The fourteenth century produced Alphonſo the fourth; and his ſon king Peter, who were both diſtinguiſhed ſons of the muſes. In the reign of king John the firſt, the Infant Don Pedro compoſed various ſonnets in praiſe of Vaſco Lobeira, author of Amadis of Gaul, a famous romance in thoſe days; and which afforded ſuch ample matter of ridicule to the fruitful genius of the great Cervantes.

Indeed, for more than a century following, poetry was ſo univerſally cultivated in Portugal, as made the hiſtorian Faria ſay, "that in his country every fountain was a Hip-"pocrene, and every hill a Parnaſſus." Indeed their latter bards ſeem to poſſeſs a truely divine enthuſiaſm; inſpired by the genius of the country, which is amorous and paſtoral; and naturally diſpoſes to poetic rapture. I inſtance Xavier de Matos; De Quita; and above all Manoel

de Coſta; who excels particularly in love-ſonnets, elegies, odes, and roundelays.

Yet all their poets muſt yield to Camoens, who, either as an epic or lyric bard, has that beauty of diction, delicacy and ſublimity of ſentiment, as eaſily entitle him to rank at the head of Portugueſe poetry. Equal, perhaps, in genius either to Taſſo or Arioſto; and prior to them in time; his ſtyle, though leſs dignified, is more ſimple and claſſical; while his adoption of the Heathen mythology, and his many claſſical alluſions, give him more the air of an ancient, than perhaps any modern poet. On this account he has been blamed by certain critics, and not without reaſon; for certainly, however delicate and noble he may be in his diction, he tranſgreſſes againſt the manners, or what the painters call the coſtume; by his following the ideas of the ancients to an extreme.

Yet we muſt allow, that his inventions, his hiſtories, his pathos, are admirable. The concluſions of his books, like Lucretius, are moral and didactic. His plan ſimple, unfolded in hiſtorical detail, and interſperſed with occaſional epiſodes, and inſtructive allegory. His deſcriptions of the demon of the Cape and the iſland of Love, are ſublime and beautiful in a high degree.

In fine, Camoens, as the author of the Luſiad, does more honour to his country, than either the hero, or diſcoveries it celebrates, ever brought glory or advantage. Any tranſlations I have ſeen of this poem fall much below the original; being either flat and proſaic, or too verboſe and diffuſe to correſpond, in any meaſure, with its conciſe brevity and ſpirit.

About this time, romance-reading, and writing, were ſo common over Europe, and had infected all ranks to ſuch a degree, with their enthuſiaſtic rant and nonſenſe; as furniſhed the author of Don Quixote with that vaſt field of ridicule, which he has traverſed in ſuch a maſterly manner, as renders him inimitable in that ſpecies of writing. Beſides his humour and entertainment, his ſtyle is all along fluent and

bold; and rolls in a copious ſtream of ſtrong and majeſtic eloquence.

However, though the Spaniſh language, in proſe, ſeems ſuperior to the Portugueſe, in force and grandeur; yet in poetry, it has never attained to that beauty, to which the Portugueſe was faſhioned by the ſweet melody of the lyre of Camoens.

Even Lopez de Vega, Ercilla, and Calderoni, the moſt renowned of the Spaniſh bards, though poſſeſt of a ſublime and verſatile genius, and nowiſe deficient in literature; have nevertheleſs proved inadequate to the taſk of ſufficiently adapting their language, either to lyric flights, the manly boldneſs of the epos, or the more decent and compoſed air of the drama. Yet I have ſeen ſonnets in this tongue ſo ſweet and tender, that they breathed the very ſpirit of claſſic poetry.

Hayley, one of the juſteſt and moſt candid of modern critics, ſomewhere ſays, that the Araucana, an epic work of Ercilla's, and the beſt of the kind in the Spaniſh tongue, flows with all the eaſe and volubility of Homer; but I ſuppoſe he means this rather of the ideas than the language, or at leaſt of the verſification, rather than its harmony.

Upon the whole, I am of opinion, that the Spaniſh language is copious, bold, and manly, and well adapted to hiſtory, novels, or, perhaps, oratory; but that there is a ſtiff majeſty in it, incompatible with the variable harmonies of poetry; that the Portugueſe, though leſs nervous and copious in proſe, is more muſical and pliable in verſe; poſſeſſing words of a moderate length and eaſy flow, and that only want a little more forcible ſound to render them highly poetical.

SECTION II.

Of Spaniſh Romances.

A NATION naturally proud and haughty; anciently bold and warlike, and delighting in chivalry; but, from temper, climate, and other concurring circumſtances, latterly formed of an indolent and amorous diſpoſition; ſuch a nation might be ſuppoſed peculiarly turned for affording materials to romance-writing. I ſpeak of ſerious romances, ſuch as Amadis de Gaul, and others of like kind.

Accordingly, in Spain, a multitude of romances of this ſort very early appeared; moſt of them wild, indeed, but deſcriptive enough of the living manners, which were then extremely romantic all over the world.

France and England, however, are ſaid to have led the way to the ſerious Romance. In France, it is likely, it would originate from the Troubadours of Provence. Prince Arthur, and the Knights of the Round Table; was the firſt effort in this way in England, and perhaps in Europe.

Spain followed the example, and ſoon produced a greater number of ſerious romances, and of a more ſublime caſt, than either of the two former. This was to be expected from a nation, naturally ſerious and ſolemn, where the point of honour runs high; where they pique themſelves on their high and noble birth; delight in legendary tales, and in miraculous fables of ſaints and heroes; and where the fair ſex are ſtill worſhipped at the expence of combats and blood.

And I ſuppoſe, that from the Spaniſh Romances, not only the Portugueſe Camoens beautified his Luſiad; but that Ercilla, and other the beſt Spaniſh poets, as well as Taſſo and Arioſto among the Italians, borrowed not only ſomething of their plan, but their romantic ſpirit, and even ſeveral of their poetical embelliſhments.

After the ſerious, comes the ſatiric Romance; which may be divided into the burleſque-ſatiric, and the humorous ſatiric kind. To the former belongs Don Quixote, and to the latter Gil Blas, both of Spaniſh origin; and both the firſt and beſt of the kind in Europe.

The author of the latter (Le Sage) 'tis true was a Frenchman, but he had borrowed the plan and characters from Spaniſh romances of vogue in his time; and, publiſhing them in his own name, with new embelliſhments, paſſed for the author.

Although Don Quixote, in point of invention, fine language, and burleſque ſatire, is ſuperior to any of the ſort; yet I look upon Gil Blas as the more agreeable romance. It is life and manners, deſcribed with a great deal of nature; and excites chearfulneſs in the reader, both from the juſtneſs of the delineation, and the mild, though ludicrous light, in which moſt of the characters are drawn.

The Diable Boiteux, by the ſame author, as alſo the Batchelor of Salamanca, all formed on Spaniſh models, are much in the ſame ſpirit, and entertaining on the ſame account.

The Olla Potrida, and Fra-Gerundio, are both late Spaniſh productions of the ſatiric kind; with a good deal of humour; but not to be compared with thoſe above-mentioned.

Among the French, as eminent in this way, may be ranked Marivaux and Crebillon; as alſo Marmontel, although the latter is rather too ſerious, and often fantaſtical, to be claſſed among the good ſatiric romancers; but they have all borrowed light from the Spaniards in this ſpecies of writing.

Even our own Fielding, in his Tom Jones, and Joſeph Andrews, profeſſedly imitates the Spaniſh ſatiric romance: his manner, though in general natural, is often wild and burleſque, like theirs; ſometimes bordering on the romantic; yet all along he wiſhes his pieces to be conſidered as complete comic dramas, or rather burleſque epic works in

proſe. For, ſays he, "ſince the modern comic novel, con-
"tains an exhibition of life and character, variouſly com-
"bined, but under one plan and deſign, and tending to
"one end, why deny it the name of comic drama, or mock-
"heroic, which you pleaſe?" He expreſſes it, perhaps, ſomewhat differently, but this was the idea conveyed to me, when ſeveral years ago, I read the preface to his principal comic work.

Upon the whole, it muſt be allowed, that the Spaniards were not only the firſt inventors of the burleſque ſatiric Romance, but that they have carried it to the higheſt perfection; which may ſeem ſtrange in ſo grave a people: but is it not your perſons of wit and humour, who laugh leaſt themſelves in company, that are moſt apt to excite laughter in others?

It muſt, likewiſe, be added, to the praiſe of the Spaniſh noveliſts, that they are much more chaſte in the ſtyle and morals, than ſome of their more modern imitators who have obtained ſo much vogue and renown.

SECTION III.

Lives and Characters of Portugueſe and Spaniſh Writers.

FROM the end of the fifteenth, till the middle of the ſixteenth century, it may be computed, that Spain enjoyed the zenith of its power and glory: from that time it gradually declined; and, for various and obvious reaſons, was eclipſed by other nations of Europe, both in military and literary fame.

Spain, has of late, however, recovered a little from her literary torpor; academies have been inſtituted at Madrid for promoting ſciences and arts, in imitation of London and Paris. Even literature, and the belles lettres, although

neglected and almoſt extinguiſhed for ſo long a time, begin to revive more and more; ſome new poets and hiſtorians have ſtarted up: And, for the firſt time, we are informed, a new tranſlation of Homer, in Spaniſh verſe, has been publiſhed at Caſtile; and another of Oſſian's poems, at Valladolid.

But as the progreſs of literature, as yet, is but ſlow, and not carried to any high degree of perfection, we ſhall confine ourſelves, as uſual, to a ſhort review of the lives and characters of the moſt early and claſſical writers.

CAMOENS:

The prince of Portugueſe poetry, was born at Liſbon, 1517. His family was of conſiderable note, and originally Spaniſh. Early in life, this poet's misfortunes began. His father was ſhipwrecked at Goa, where, with his life, the greateſt part of his fortune was loſt. However, his mother provided for her ſon's education at the univerſity of Coimbra; where his intimacy with the claſſics improved his taſte, and kindled his genius. After leaving the univerſity, he retired to his mother's friends at Santarene, where he began his poem on the diſcovery of India.

John III, at this time, was preparing an expedition againſt Africa. Camoens, tired of an inactive life, went to Ceuta in this expedition, and ſignalized his valour in ſeveral rencounters. In one of theſe, near the ſtraits of Gibraltar, in the conflict of boarding, he was among the foremoſt, and loſt his right eye. Yet neither the hurry of actual ſervice, nor the diſſipation of the camp, could ſuppreſs his genius. He continued his Luſiad; and ſeveral of his moſt beautiful ſonnets were written in Africa; while, as he expreſſed it, "One hand the pen, and one the ſword employed."

On the banks of the Mehon, he wrote his charming paraphraſe of the pſalm; where the Jews, in the fineſt ſtrains of poetry, are repreſented as hanging their harps on the willows by the rivers of Babylon, and weeping their exile from

their native country. I have read this poem many times over with great pleaſure.

He afterwards went to India; whence, after encountering various misfortunes, he returned to Liſbon, after an abſence of ſixteen years; where, at laſt, he completed and printed his Luſiad in 1572, addreſſed to king Sebaſtian, then in his 18th year. Being neglected by the court in the following reign, he is ſaid to have died in all the miſeries of poverty; in the 62d year of his age.

ERCILLA:

Was equally diſtinguiſhed as a hero and a poet. He was born in Madrid, 1533. Being early introduced into the houſehold of the emperor Charles V, he obtained the appointment of page to the Infant Don Philip; and, at the age of fourteen, he attended that prince, in the ſplendid progreſs he made, at the deſire of his imperial father, through the principal cities of the Netherlands, and through parts of Italy and Germany.

He, likewiſe, attended the ſame royal maſter into England, on his marriage with queen Mary, which was celebrated at Wincheſter, in the ſummer of 1554. 'Twas at this time Ercilla aſſumed his military character; for his ſovereign received advice, during his reſidence at London, that the martial natives of Arauco, a diſtrict on the coaſt of Chili, had revolted from the Spaniſh government; he diſpatched Alderete, an experienced officer, to quell the inſurrection. Our poet was both an actor in it, and a relator of this war; and, upon it, he founded his famous epic work, Araucana. He was a genius of the firſt rank, and, beſides this work, which abounds in fancy and tender deſcription, he alſo compoſed dramatic pieces with great applauſe; and ſeveral fine ſonnets.

So that, upon the whole, the æra of Ercilla, Cervantes, Lopez de Vega, &c. may be juſtly accounted the golden epoch of the Spaniſh language; beginning with Ercilla, and ending with Antonio de Solis, and Calderoni.

CERVANTES:

Was born at Madrid, 1549. He was a great ſcholar in his earlieſt years, and particularly fond of plays and romances. His firſt work of the novel-kind, called Galatea, he publiſhed in 1584: he alſo, about the ſame time, wrote tragedies and comedies, which met with good reception on the ſtage. And not long after he began his celebrated Don Quixote, which he entered upon in his 50th year; and when confined to the walls of a priſon. Cervantes was unfortunate, like other men of genius; but he bore all with the greateſt firmneſs. He loſt his arm in the battle of Lepanto, was often oppreſſed with poverty, and generally neglected by the court and grandees.

Although the king admired his Quixote, he did not reward the author. The following anecdote is told of that admiration. As Philip the III. was ſtanding in a balcony of his palace at Madrid, and viewing the country, he obſerved a ſtudent on the banks of the river Manzanales reading a book, and from time to time breaking off, and knocking his forehead with the palms of his hands, with extraordinary tokens of pleaſure and delight: upon which the king ſaid to thoſe about him; "that ſcholar is either "mad, or reading the hiſtory of Don Quixote." Sending to enquire, the king was immediately informed, that it was that book he was really reading.

The ſplendid edition of Don Quixote, lately publiſhed at Madrid, by order of the court, and under the inſpection of the Royal Academy, reflects honour on Spain; and is a proof that literature has become a national concern; and is in a fair way of further advancement.

LOPEZ DE VEGA:

Is ſaid to have given ſuch unwearied application to poetry, that he conſtantly wrote five ſheets a-day. His poems are lately publiſhed in nineteen 4to volumes; his dramatic works are to be added to the collection, and will probably be ſtill more voluminous. He was a man of a robuſt frame of

body; healthy by continual temperance; in converſation, mild and unaſſuming; very eager when engaged in the buſineſs of his friends, and ſomewhat careleſs in the management of his own.

One of the moſt amiable peculiarities in the character of Lopez de Vega, is the extreme liberality with which he commends the merit of his rivals. In his Laurel d' Apolo, he celebrates all the eminent Spaniſh and Portugueſe poets; and he ſpeaks both of Camoens and Ercilla with the warmeſt applauſe. He was born 1562, and died 1635.

QUEVEDO:

Was born at Madrid, 1570; being a man of quality, and knight of the order of St. James. He was one of the beſt writers of his age, and excelled equally in verſe and proſe: his heroic pieces of poetry, ſays Nicolas Antonio, have great force and ſublimity; his lyric, great beauty and ſweetneſs; and his humorous pieces, a certain eaſe and pleaſantry peculiar to themſelves.

His proſe-works are of two ſorts, ſerious and comical; the former on moral and religious ſubjects; the latter ſatirical, full of wit, vivacity, and humour. The comical humorous part of his proſe-works has been tranſlated into Engliſh. "The Viſions," are a Satire upon corruption of manners, in all ranks and degrees of people; are full of wit and morality, and have found ſuch a reception as to go through ſeveral editions. He died 1647. Although he was ſo conſummate a wit and poet, yet he is ſaid to have been extremely learned, and that he underſtood the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, and French languages.

On account of his wit and poetry he has been called the Ovid of Spain; as Ercilla has been reckoned its Homer; and de Vega, its Shakeſpeare.

MARIANA:

Eſteemed one of the very beſt of Spaniſh hiſtorians, flouriſhed towards the middle of the ſixteenth century: he

wrote the hiſtory of Spain with great applauſe, in which he has the art of interweaving many parts of ancient hiſtory. His ſtyle is noble and intereſting. His hiſtory reaches to the year 1516; but it is continued by other writers, in the laſt Madrid edition, to 1678.

ANTONIO DE SOLIS:

Was born at Placenza in Old Caſtile, 1610. He was ſent to Salamanca to ſtudy the law, but ſoon relinquiſhed it for the pleaſures of poetry, to which he had an early bent. He was but ſeventeen, when he wrote an ingenious comedy, entitled Amor y Obligacion.

In 1642, he wrote his comedy of Orpheus and Eurydice. About this time, Philip the IV. of Spain made him one of his ſecretaries; and, after his death, the Queen Regent made him firſt hiſtoriographer of the Indies. And, indeed, his Hiſtory of the Diſcovery and Conqueſt of Spaniſh America, ſhews that ſhe could not have choſen a fitter perſon; for it is written with great elegance, and in a moſt engaging manner. It is conciſe, pure, and expreſſive; ſomewhat in the manner of Salluſt.

In his latter days, de Solis dedicated himſelf entirely to religion; and even became a prieſt at 57. He died in 1686.

CALDERONI:

Was firſt an officer in the army, where, after diſtinguiſhing himſelf, he quitted the military, for the eccleſiaſtical profeſſion; and afterwards commenced dramatic writer. There are nine volumes 4to of his works, and he has been compared by ſome to Shakeſpeare; but I think not with the ſame juſtice as Lopez de Vega. He flouriſhed 1640.

Having now finiſhed our ſurvey of Portugueſe and Spaniſh Literature; we next come to treat of the French.

PART VI.

French Literature.

SECTION I.

Of the French Literature and Language.

AFTER the age of Camoens and Cervantes, both the Portugueſe and Spaniſh poetry declined, owing to that tinſel and falſe ſublime which began to infect alſo the Italians; but was rejected by the French, whoſe poetry grew more refined every day; but, from an incapacity in the language, deficiency of poetic diction, or, perhaps, of ſtrong native genius, was never carried to any thing great or accompliſhed in this department of literature.

Marot, Ronſard, and Malherbe, are among the firſt and beſt of their poets. Their turn is natural and ingenious, their verſe ſmooth; and they, particularly, excel in tales, familiar epiſtles, love-ſonnets, and roundelays.

Malherbe, eſpecially, merits applauſe; and ſeems to have formed an epoch by himſelf. Sublimity of ideas, a vein of happy and rich expreſſion, perſpicuity and eaſe, together with a perpetual harmony of verſification, ſeem to have diſtinguiſhed this excellent bard; and he, if any, ought to be called the father of French poetry.

Fontaine has imitated their manner in his fables; but has ſuperadded a peculiar vein of humour, that, in my opinion, ſets him at the head of this claſs of writers, not excepting our own Gay; whoſe turn, though natural and eaſy, ſeems

inferior, in point of native invention, to the Frenchman; while Eſop as a valuable original, and Phædrus, for a poliſhed elegance of language, muſt be allowed a ſuperior precedence.

Here, then, conſiſts the main excellence of the French poetry. Turns of humour, fables, ſongs, and the ſmaller Ode ſeem peculiarly adapted to it. The natural vivacity of the nation, inadequate to any thing great or ſolemn, influences their language, and diffuſes that air of gaiety which pervades their converſation; and even intrudes itſelf with a jovial kind of grimace into their more ſerious compoſitions.

Montaigne in philoſophy, and Voltaire in hiſtory; are good inſtances of the above remark. However ſolemn their ſubject, they treat it humorouſly, reject all ſeverity, and are continually laughing in the midſt of the moſt ſerious diſcuſſions. Rabelais throws off the maſk of gravity, altogether; and gives the utmoſt licence to humour, burleſque wit, and wild invention.

Voiture and St. Evremond, both embrace a philoſophy where voluptuouſneſs and eaſe predominate, and the ſmiles and graces attend as handmaids. Fontenelle excels in that good-humoured kind of wit that throws an air of pleaſantry on the moſt ſerious topics.

Marivaux, Le Sage, and Crebillon, in their Tales and Adventures; deſcribe manners and mankind with a maſterly pencil, and infinite humour. Le Bruyere does the ſame in his Characters; which, the oftner they are read, give the more pleaſure and inſtruction; and I know no book that, in miniature, contains more juſt and exact paintings of human nature. Boileau, as an elegant and ſprightly ſatiriſt, may be added to the above liſt of humorous writers.

On the other hand, Paſcal, Balzac, Boſſu, Fenelon, and Rouſſeau; are in ſome meaſure exceptions to the above obſervation, and have ſuch prevailing merit on the ſide of ſolemnity, as to produce a moſt agreeable contraſt to the ſuperior number of the laughing philoſophers.

The celebrated Monteſquieu, as a writer, partakes of the ſpirit of each order, and is equally eminent in grave diſquiſition, acute remark, lively humour, and elegant criticiſm. His ſtyle is pointed, ſententious, conciſe; his fancy brilliant; his thoughts new and ingenious, often juſt, but ſometimes too refined, and involved in obſcurity from a laboured brevity of expreſſion.

But whatever figure the French may have made as philoſophers, critics, or noveliſts, I apprehend their merit in the drama, is leſs conſpicuous than has been generally imagined. That their ſtage is more decent than any other, will be granted; but what it gains in regularity and correctneſs, it has loſt in ſpirit and original character.

Moliere, 'tis true, in the walks of humour, ſtands without a rival on the French theatre. But Corneille and Racine, however extolled by their own nation, will ſcarcely be allowed, by good judges, to rival either Shakeſpeare or Euripides. Their ſentiments and diction are often too declamatory; eſpecially Corneille's. Their language is particularly againſt them. That mode of verſification adopted by the French in all their tragic or heroic pieces, is ſo rapid and friſky, in its modulation, that it ſeems a perfect contraſt to the ſubject; and, to a foreigner eſpecially, ſounds diſagreeable, monotonous, and burleſque *.

* The following example of the levity of the French verſe was given me by a reſpectable Judge, to whom I have been often obliged.

" The paſſage I allude to in the Henriade of Voltaire, is as follows, " in Canto 2, line 61. The poet concludes his character of the deteſtable " Catherine de Medicis with theſe four lines:

" Eſclave de plaiſirs, mais moins qu' ambitieuſe:
" Infidelle a ſa ſecte, et ſuperſtitieuſe,
" Poſſedant en un mot, pour n' en pas dire plus,
" Les defauts de ſon ſexe, et peu de ſes vertus."

" This has a little of the air of antitheſis, in which Voltaire often deals, " and is part of his hero Henry the fourth's ſpeech to Queen Eliſabeth, " in which he deſcribes the horrors of the maſſacre of Paris in ſtrains of " good rhyming poetry. The hero then quickly turns to a compliment

So that it is no wonder that ſo able a critic as Lord Lanſdowne, long ago, inveighed againſt this rapid levity of the French verſe; by comparing it to the rattling of a wheel-barrow on a gravel-walk.

Therefore, whatever pains the French academy has taken to poliſh and refine their language; it is probable it will for ever remain incapable of producing two of the nobleſt efforts of human genius, a good tragedy or epic poem. Voltaire's Henriade is no exception to this general remark.

The age of Lewis XIV, was the golden æra of the French tongue. And ſurely, for hiſtory, romance, morals, criticiſm, philoſophy, or converſation, no language is better adapted. It is neat, clear, preciſe, accurate. It breathes the ſpirit of the people, which is vivacity. From a lively flow of animal ſpirits, they poſſeſs a quick inſight into every thing, diſcuſs them rapidly; and being, in general, diveſted of that depth of thought, and variety of ideas which retard or obſcure the expreſſion of their more ſolemn neighbours, they are hence enabled to ſpeak with facility,

" on the Queen, which ſeems quaint and ludicrous in a heroic poem:
" He adds as follows:

" Ce mot m' eſt echappè, pardonnez ma franchiſe;
" Dans ce ſexe, apres tout, vous n' etes point compriſe;
" L' auguſte Eliſabeth n' en a que les appas:
" Le ciel qui vous forma pour regir des Etats,
" Vous fait ſervir d' exemple a tous tant que nous ſommes,
" Et l' Europe vous compte au rang de *plus grands hommes*."

" As to Machiavel, about whom you enquire, I muſt obſerve, that he " is eſteemed one of the beſt and moſt judicious writers in the Italian lan- " guage. He was profoundly ſagacious, learned, and elegant. His prin- " ciples are generally miſunderſtood. Like Tacitus, he details and de- " tects the wicked arts of tyrants; yet was no friend to abſolute monar- " chy. I do not know that his invaluable works are well tranſlated; " either into French or Engliſh. Indeed we have very few good tranſla- " tions of claſſical books; a great ſervice yet unperformed to our republic " of letters." G.

promptneſs, and preciſion on moſt ſubjects. Their only fault ſeems to be an exceſs of refinement, both in ſentiment and expreſſion. Theſe are genteel, but ſometimes too finical.

SECTION II.

Lives and Characters of French Authors.

RABELAIS:

FAMOUS for his ſingular and facetious wit, was born in Touraine, at Chinon, in 1483. He was firſt a Franciſcan Friar, but quitted his religious habit, and followed the ſtudy of phyſic at Montpelier, where he took his doctor's degrees.

He publiſhed ſeveral things; but his chief work is a ſtrange incoherent romance, named the hiſtory of Gargantua and Pantagruel; being a ſatire upon prieſts, popes, fools, and knaves of all kinds.

Like Sterne's Triſtram Shandy, it contains a wild and irregular profuſion of wit, learning, obſcenity, low conceits, and downright nonſenſe. It is in many places intolerably obſcure, ſo is Triſtram; but the latter has one excellence that the other has not; viz. ſome paſſages of the pathetic, that hardly atone for its obſcenity and nonſenſe. Rabelais died in 1539. There is a good tranſlation of his works in our language by Motteux and Ozell.

MONTAIGNE:

Was born at Perigord, 1533. His father educated him with great care, and taught him Latin, as other children learn their mother tongue; not by a preceptor, but by hearing nothing elſe ſpoke around him. He made him learn Greek in much the ſame manner; and, becauſe ſtarting a child too ſuddenly out of his ſleep might ſpoil his under-

ſtanding; he awakened him every morning by the ſound of muſic.

Montaigne was counſellor, for a while, in the parliament of Bourdeaux. He publiſhed his Eſſays, 1580; and died 1592.

In his temper he was whimſical, and not a little vain. Humour ſeems to be his predominant character; mixed with philoſophy and a chearful kind of morality. His manner of writing is rambling and diffuſe; yet ſenſible and entertaining; almoſt always intereſting, eſpecially when he ſpeaks of himſelf; for he tells us his failings as well as his good qualities, and his book is a complete picture of his mind without the ſmalleſt diſguiſe. Its greateſt fault, is its being too often interlarded with obſcene alluſions, and laſcivious diſcuſſions. It is otherwiſe moral, witty, and lively.

There has been, as yet, no good tranſlation of Montaigne's Eſſays; and the peculiar turn of the original, beſides the obſoleteneſs of the ſtyle, would render ſuch a work difficult.

FONTAINE:

One of the greateſt geniuſes of his age, was born in Champaigne, July 8, 1721, of good extraction. He was twenty-two years of age before he knew his own talent for poetry; but hearing an Ode of Malherbe read upon the aſſaſſination of Henry IV, he was ſo taken with admiration of it, that the poetic fire, before dormant, ſeemed from that moment to be enkindled in him.

He applied himſelf to read, to meditate, to repeat; in fine, to imitate the works of Malherbe. He was intimately acquainted with the beſt Latin poets, as alſo the beſt compoſitions in French and Italian. He likewiſe applied himſelf to the ſtudy of Greek authors; particularly Plato and Plutarch. Some time after, he married a relation of the famous Racine.

The lady, beſides diſtinguiſhed beauty, poſſeſſed a great deal of wit; and Fontaine never compoſed any material

work without conſulting her. From this wife, however, (her temper being none of the beſt), he ſeparated; upon which, by invitation, he lived with the family of Madam de Sabliere; ſtill paying a viſit annually to his wife, and carrying with him Racine, Boileau, Chapelle, or ſome other eminent writer. When he had gone thither alone, he often came away without remembering to call for her; but ſeldom omitted ſelling ſome of his lands, by which means he ſquandered away a conſiderable fortune.

Upon his death-bed, he was a thorough penitent, and regreted, particularly, his Tales, as being too wanton; promiſing, that if he lived, he would write nothing but works of morality and piety. He died, March 13th, 1695, being 74 years of age.

Fontaine's character is remarkable for ſimplicity, candor, and probity uncommon. He was of an obliging diſpoſition; maintaining a real friendſhip with his brother-poets and authors; and, what is very rare, beloved and eſteemed by them all. His converſation was neither gay nor brilliant; eſpecially when not among his intimate friends.

His Fables, as well as his Tales, are maſterly works, that do honour to the French language; and excel, in humour, every thing of the kind, both ancient and modern. People of taſte, the oftener they read them, find new charms, not to be met with elſewhere. His ſtyle poſſeſſes infinite eaſe and grace, as well as true and original humour.

THUANUS:

In point of time ſhould be placed before Fontaine, as he was born, 1553; being almoſt contemporary with Sully, and reſembling him a good deal in character.

Having finiſhed his ſtudies and travels, he was made preſident a Mortier in 1595. He was employed in ſeveral important offices of ſtate, and, in reforming the univerſity of Paris; which he diſcharged with ſo much virtue and prudence, that he was eſteemed the Cato of his age, and the ornament of France. He wrote the hiſtory of his own times

in Latin, from 1543 to 1608, in 138 books; a work, both for ſubject and ſtyle, worthy of the ancients. He alſo left memoirs of his own life, beſides poems. He died at Paris, 1617.

SULLY:

Was one of the ableſt and moſt upright miniſters that France ever produced, deſcended from an illuſtrious houſe; and born in 1560.

He entered very young into the ſervice of Henry of Bourbon and king of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV; who was juſt ſeven years older. He was bred in the Reformed religion, and continued in it to the end of his life; though, from political motives, he adviſed his monarch to abjure it, as the only means to put an end to the miſeries of France. After Henry got poſſeſſion of the kingdom, Sully performed all the duties of a great and juſt miniſter, while his maſter exerciſed all the offices of a great and good king.

He had been at the battles of Coutras, Arques and Ivry; at the ſieges of Pavia, Noyon, Rouen, and Laon, and ſignalized himſelf on many important occaſions. But he was chiefly diſtinguiſhed as a miniſter and financier; able, upright, ſteady, and active, he watched inceſſantly over the king's intereſt, and put his finances in ſuch order, that he paid his debts, which amounted to two hundred millions of livres, and laid up great ſums in the treaſury. Never was France more flouriſhing, by the eſtabliſhment of peace, and the encouragement of arts, under a patriotic king, and equally patriotic miniſter.

Sully died at his caſtle of Villebon, December 21, 1641, at 82 years of age. His Memoirs are deſervedly ranked among the beſt books of French hiſtory: they contain a moſt particular account of what paſſed from the peace 1570, to the death of Henry IV, in 1610; and acquire additional value for the many curious anecdotes preſerved in them. Their ſtyle and manner are highly intereſting. They were

tranſlated into Engliſh by Mrs. Lennox, 1757; not with entire juſtice to the original.

PASCAL:

One of the ſublimeſt geniuſes in the world, was born at Clermont in Auvergne, June 19, 1623. He never had any maſter but his father, who was a very learned man, an able mathematician, and preſident of the Court of Aids.

"What is told of the manner he learned the mathema-
"tics, (as Bayle ſays), ſeems to be miraculous, as well as
"the progreſs he made in that ſcience in a very little time;
"but that which we are told of his piety, humility, and
"ſelf-denial, are no leſs wonderful.

"After he had taken a great deal of pains in experiments
"of the new Philoſophy, he forſook that ſtudy, and all
"other learning, to apply himſelf to what Jeſus Chriſt calls
"the one thing needful. He was not yet twenty-four years
"old, when the reading of ſome pious book put him on this
"reſolution. The patience that he ſhowed in his illneſſes,
"which were long and frequent, ought alſo to be matter
"of aſtoniſhment. He died in 1662.

"He had been a long time employed about a work a-
"gainſt the Atheiſts, and all thoſe who deny the truth of
"the Goſpel. He did not live long enough to digeſt the
"materials he had collected; but what was found concern-
"ing that ſubject among his papers was publiſhed and ad-
"mired." So far M. Bayle; who ſeems neither to con-demn nor approve of his arguments in favour of religion.

In theſe fragments, however, Paſcal hath given us power-ful arguments, why we ſhould embrace religion, as the ſafeſt courſe, even under a ſtate of doubt. His thoughts on this ſubject are deep, original, and entirely his own; and that perſon has a hard heart that is not either moved or con-vinced by them. His compariſon of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations is new and intereſting; and he every where ſhows the deepeſt reſearch, and the moſt intimate acquaint-ance with the true ſpirit of the Old and New Teſtament.

Surely, it is a material argument in favour of Chriſtianity; that a genius, ſo profound, inquiſitive, and mathematical, ſhould have embraced it from conviction of its truth; upon an impartial view of its evidences*. And it is extremely to be lamented that ſo great a genius, did not live to finiſh this plan in favour of religion, of which we have only but Sketches.

Afterwards, in the ſame book, come his thoughts on various ſubjects; which are ſhort and conciſe, but extremely ingenious and juſt; and equal to thoſe of Rochfaucault, Bruyere, or any of your beſt maxim-writers in France.

The Provençal Letters of Paſcal, have been, and are ſtill eſteemed a maſter-piece. He is, in that book, an advocate for the Janſeniſts againſt the Moliniſts, a diſpute in itſelf, perhaps, not very intereſting, and now ſinking into oblivion. But theſe Letters are written with ſuch elegance and propriety; ſuch delicate humour and force of argument; that they are ſtill read on account of the ſtyle; which, as Voltaire juſtly obſerves, is wonderful for the early æra in which it was compoſed.

RAPIN:

A famous Jeſuit, was born at Tours 1621; and admitted into the ſociety 1639. He taught the Belles Lettres for the ſpace of nine years. He had partly made it his ſtudy, and ſhowed, by ſome Latin pieces, that he could treat the moſt curious ſubjects with a great deal of art and eloquence. He excelled in Latin poetry; and having at laſt ventured to write in French, he ſucceeded in it to admiration. He compoſed in that language ſeveral treatiſes of literature, and ſeveral pious books which were well received. Some think he is too poſitive and deciſive, for a man who ſeems to have more judgment and taſte, than learning or know-

* The ſame is ſaid of Sir Iſaac Newton, who at firſt was an infidel, and afterwards became a Chriſtian, in conſequence of having read the Scriptures, and examined the evidences with great attention.

ledge. This is Bayle's account of him; who, in general, judges juſtly, and with candor; eſpecially when religion is out of the queſtion. Rapin died at Paris, 1687.

He was a profeſſed enemy to the Janſeniſts, and attacked their ſyſtem of grace and predeſtination, in different treatiſes, with great vigour.

RACINE:

Of the French Academy, was born at Ferre-Milon, in 1639. He produced his Thebaide when very young; and afterwards other pieces, which met with great applauſe, when Corneille was at the height of his reputation.

Partly chagrined with ſome oppoſition he met with, and from other motives, he quitted the ſtage when only thirty-eight years of age; and henceforth reſolved to dedicate his whole time to religion. In 1677, he undertook with Boileau, to write a hiſtory of Lewis XIV; but, after trial, both dropt the deſign, finding it unſuitable to their genius.

Too great a ſenſibility and impotence of ſpirit, ſhortened the days of this amiable man. He was remarkable for timidity; and ſome angry words from the king upon a publication of his, in which he meddled with the court, ſo chagrined and affected him, that he fevered upon it, and died 1699.

There is nothing in the French language written with more eaſe and elegance than his proſe; and his poetry is in the ſame character. He has been called the Euripides of France, as Corneille has been called its Sophocles: although this laſt, having formed himſelf upon the ſtiff and lofty ſtyle of Lucan, can bear but little reſemblance to the Athenian bard.

THE TWO DACIERS:

Andrew Dacier. This famous French critic and philologiſt was born at Caſtres, in Upper Languedoc, 1651. He was ſent to the univerſity of Saumur, and finiſhed his claſſical ſtudies under Taneguy le Fevre, or Tanaquil Faber.

This excellent maſter was ſo taken with his uncommon genius and turn for letters, that he kept him alone in his houſe, after he had diſmiſſed the reſt of his pupils; and 'twas here that Dacier conceived that affection for Le Fevre's celebrated daughter, which ended, at laſt, in their marriage.

He was ſoon after recommended to the duke of Montauſier, governor to the dauphin, who put him on the liſt of commentators for the uſe of that prince, and engaged him in an edition of Pompeius Feſtus.

His Horace, with a tranſlation and notes critical and hiſtorical, came out at Paris in ten volumes 12mo, 1681; and has often been printed ſince. In 1683 Dacier married Madamoiſelle Le Fevre, and in 1685 abjured with his lady the Proteſtant religion; no doubt at the perſuaſions of the court, from which they had already experienced ſuch favour.

Upon this occaſion Dacier's ſtudies ſeem to have been interrupted; for we hear no more of him, till, in 1692, he publiſhed Ariſtotle's Poetics, tranſlated into French, with critical remarks. Thereafter followed his tranſlation of the Œdipus, and Electra of Sophocles; Plutarch's Lives; with the works of Hippocrates and Plato, all tranſlated into French with critical notes. Theſe notes were eſteemed very learned; and, at the ſame time, were expreſſed with great modeſty and politeneſs. He alſo wrote notes on Longinus, and a Commentary on Theocritus.

He died 1722, aged 71 years. He was equally a lover of learning and virtue; choſe none but uſeful ſubjects, and enriched the French language with thoſe remains of antiquity that are moſt advantageous to the morals of mankind.

Anne Dacier, wife of Andrew Dacier, and daughter of Tanaquil Faber, was born 1651. She was eleven years old when her father firſt reſolved to give her a learned education. Upon her father's death in 1673, ſhe went to Paris,

and was then engaged in an edition of Callimachus, which ſhe publiſhed in 1674, in 4to. Some ſheets of this work having been ſhown to Huetius, preceptor to the dauphin, and other learned men at court; it was propoſed to her, to prepare ſome Latin authors for the uſe of the dauphin; which, though at firſt ſhe declined, ſhe at laſt undertook, and publiſhed an edition of Florus in 1674.

Her reputation being now ſpread over Europe, Chriſtina of Sweden ordered Count Coningſmark to make her a preſent in her name; upon which Mad. Le Fevre ſent the queen a Latin letter with her edition of Florus. Her majeſty wrote her an obliging anſwer, and ſoon after another letter, with conſiderable offers to come and ſettle at court, all which ſhe rejected, and proceeded in her taſk of publiſhing authors for the uſe of the dauphin.

Sextus Aurelius was publiſhed under her care at Paris, 1681; as alſo a French tranſlation of Anacreon and Sappho with notes, which met with great applauſe: Then Eutropius, Dictys Cretenſis, and Dares Phrygius. She alſo publiſhed French tranſlations of the Amphytrio, Epidicus, and Rudens, comedies of Plautus; and of the Plutus and Clouds of Ariſtophanes, with notes, and an examen of all theſe plays according to the rules of the drama. She was ſo charmed with the "Clouds of Ariſtophanes," that ſhe ſays ſhe had read it over a hundred times with pleaſure.

In the midſt of all theſe occupations, ſhe found leiſure to marry Dacier, with whom ſhe had been brought up in her father's houſe from her earlieſt years; and ſhe had by him two daughters and a ſon. In 1688 ſhe publiſhed a tranſlation of Terence's comedies with notes. She is ſaid to have riſen at five o'clock in the morning during a very ſharp winter, and to have diſpatched four of the comedies. This performance was univerſally admired.

She had, along with her huſband, a hand in the tranſlation of Marcus Antoninus, as alſo of Plutarch's Lives. In 1711, ſhe publiſhed a tranſlation of Homer's Iliad with

notes in three vols 12mo; which, though reckoned elegant and faithful in the French, muſt be allowed by good judges to be flat, compared to the original. In ſuch a free tranſlation, or rather paraphraſe, the true ſpirit of Homer becomes vapid or loſt in too great a profuſion of words †. She afterwards tranſlated the Odyſſey in the ſame manner. The notes in both theſe tranſlations have great value; being generally juſt and ingenious, as well as learned.

M. Dacier was as remarkable for her modeſty, and unaſſuming manners, as for her learning. She was ſo ſhy and delicate, that even her moſt intimate friends could ſcarcely engage her to diſcourſe upon ſubjects of literature. A German traveller, of great learning, paying her a viſit, requeſted her to write her name, and a ſentence in his Album; which was a favour generally aſked of the learned in thoſe days. She obſerving, in that book, the names of the greateſt ſcholars in Europe, told him that ſhe was aſhamed to put her name among ſo many illuſtrious perſons; and that ſuch a preſumption, by no means, became her. At laſt, overcome by his intreaties, ſhe took her pen, and wrote her name, together with this verſe of Sophocles:

"Γυναιξιν ἡ σιγη φερει κοσμον."

"Modeſty is a woman's chief ornament."

The German, upon reading that ſentence, was ſtruck with admiration of ſo much modeſty, joined to ſuch exten-

† We have ſtill a greater inſtance of a bad tranſlation of Homer in our own language, by Mr. Macpherſon; who has tranſlated Oſſian very well, but Homer very ill. Pope's tranſlation is poſſeſſed of a conſiderable portion of the original ſpirit, M. Dacier's is flat, but modeſt; whereas Macpherſon affects a ſtrutting dignity, as if he aſpired at emulating his author; yet all the while mangles and transforms him; beats his ſolid gold into gold-leaf, wire-draws and ſpins out his manly and nervous ſentences into futility or bombaſt; and, upon the whole, miſunderſtands, debaſes, and deſtroys the ſpirit of the greateſt poet of all antiquity.

ſive and exquiſite learning. M. Dacier died in her 69th year.

Upon the whole, both the Daciers do honour to France, as eminent critics and tranſlators; and among the foremoſt promoters of ancient learning, in modern times. And, in their own times, they ſerved as a perfect contraſt to Perrault, and others his abettors; who affected to cry up modern learning, and eſtabliſh it on the ruins of the ancient.

FENELON AND BOSSUET:

Boſſuet, biſhop of Meaux, and antagoniſt of Fenelon on the ſubject of Quietiſm, was born at Dijon 1627. He, at firſt, applied himſelf to the ſtudy of the Holy Scriptures, and the ancient fathers, in which he made great proficiency.

He ſoon became a moſt celebrated preacher, and was invited to Paris; where, being introduced at court, he was appointed preceptor to the dauphin. When he had almoſt finiſhed the education of this prince, he addreſſed to him his "Diſcourſe on Univerſal Hiſtory," a book of high merit; as a picture in miniature of ancient and modern hiſtory, both civil and eccleſiaſtic; and digeſted in chronological order. It is full of morality, piety, and good arguments in favour of religion: its ſtyle conciſe, lively, and picturesque. His Sermons are much eſteemed, particularly his funeral orations. He died 1704.

Fenelon, though inferior in controverſy to Boſſuet, had, perhaps, more genius; and as much learning. Like Plato, he was calm, ſedate, grave, and ſublime: his temper, on all occaſions, ſeems to have been compoſed and ſerene; and the ſame ſpirit runs through all his writings. Even, upon his quarrel with the biſhop of Meaux, and his afterwards being diſmiſſed from court; he retained his patience to the laſt, and retired in the utmoſt tranquillity to his dioceſe of Cambray.

His myſtical ſpirit, he ſeems to have adopted from Plato; ſtill further increaſed by his converſations with the famous

Madam Guyon; and originating, no doubt, from the liveliness of his fancy, and the sensibility of his heart. His chief work, "The Adventures of Telemachus," though written for the use of a young prince, is a book calculated for general utility, abounding in morality, sentiment, and fine description; and written in that easy, flowing, and elegant style, which distinguishes all the author's writings. Fenelon was an excellent classic scholar, and a great admirer of the ancient learning and simplicity. Witness his Treatise on Eloquence. He wrote, also, Dialogues of the Dead, in the manner of Lucian, which have been well imitated by his countryman Fontenelle; and by Lord Lyttleton in our own language. He died 1715, aged 63 years.

Chevalier Ramsay, a Scotchman; the friend, companion, and imitator of Fenelon, wrote his "Cyrus the Great," in imitation of Telemachus. It is an useful and good book for youth; and, though not written with much elegance, is entertaining, moral, and philosophical.

MONTESQUIEU:

Was born 1689, near Bourdeaux; of an ancient and noble family.

He seems to have possest a peculiarly liberal turn of mind, in regard to religion and government, even from his earliest years; and some of his pieces were found fault with in France, on account of that liberality. He, however, to his last moments, professed his reverence to Christianity; and though he has many touches of satire against its abuses, yet an amiable benevolence seems to have directed all his thoughts, and the good of mankind all his researches. His Persian Letters are full of delicate and just satire; their manner new, and containing strictures on philosophy and literature, extremely characteristic of his genius.

His great work, however, is his "Spirit of Laws;" a work of twenty years labour. He here traverses a wide field, and takes a full view of laws, both in theory and practice; canvassing the various forms of government, in

ancient and modern times, and in all the different nations of the world. Nothing eſcapes his penetrating eye. All is ſubjected to his extenſive range. Suffice it to ſay, that beſides genius, this work poſſeſſes depth, preciſion, philoſophy, and a high degree of philanthropy. It muſt, however, be owned, that its peculiarly conciſe manner gives it an air of dryneſs and obſcurity, that makes it leſs generally admired, than it would be otherwiſe. It has this fault, particularly, in the beginning: which is like a ſtumbling-block to many readers, and prevents their going forward in a book that grows more and more entertaining as you advance.

Candor and philanthropy ran through all the life, as well as writings of this great and amiable man. His converſation with the world was open, ſimple, and ſincere; and the modeſty and openneſs of his mien reſembled that of his converſation.

On February 10, 1755, he died as he had lived, without oſtentation or puſillanimity. To the liberal ſpirit diffuſed by his writings among his countrymen, may be partly aſcribed the firſt ſparks of liberty that blazed in France; which have been ſince fomented and encouraged by others of their writers, eſpecially Voltaire, who, in part, propheſied the preſent revolution; which, conſidering all circumſtances, cannot be matched in the hiſtory of mankind.

ROUSSEAU:

Who has not heard of Rouſſeau? As he has been ſo much cried up in the learned world, though I think above his merit, I ſhall conclude with a ſketch of his character, which I pretend not to give as infallible dictates for others, but as expreſſive of my own ſentiments of ſo extraordinary a genius.

Rouſſeau was a compound of parts, vanity, philoſophy, and madneſs. He affected peculiar opinions; and adopted ſcepticiſm and paradox from oſtentation. As a philoſopher,

he is more ſingular than juſt, more ingenious than ſolid.

His ſtyle, as a writer, it muſt be confeſſed, is often brilliant and luminous, and full of eloquence; his ſentiments always on the ſide of liberty and virtue; his thoughts ſhrewd and ingenious. Compared to Voltaire, he ſeems leſs entertaining and inſtructive; though, in argument, more acute and profound.

Excellent ſentiments, well expreſſed, and many fine paſſages may be ſelected from his works; but, in general, they contain ſo much abſurdity and affected novelty of thinking, that they are of little uſe to the world: his ſchemes are often wild and impracticable, and militate againſt all the rules of ſociety and good order.

In England his works have been particularly admired on account of their novelty; but his reputation, of late years, has much declined, and his works ſeem ſinking into oblivion. And indeed there appears nothing to retard their fate, but the charm and elegance of the ſtyle, joined to the peculiar novelty of the ſentiment.

Sterne, as a noveliſt, (notwithſtanding his former celebrity), ſeems falling into the ſame neglect, and for the ſame reaſon. He was affected and extravagant *.

As to Rouſſeau's Nouvelle Heloyſe, the ſtyle is tender, beautiful, and elegant in a high degree, but how inconſiſtent the plan and moral with the ſentiments!

Shall we compare him to Richardſon, whom he ſo much admired as a ſentimental noveliſt? we ſhall find the latter more moral in action and deſign, and ſtill more delicate in ſentiment. Rouſſeau inculcates virtue in ſtrong terms, yet makes his characters act directly oppoſite; for which inconſiſtency Voltaire juſtly ridiculed him in his Prophecy "Of "the man who ſhould ariſe on the banks of the Lake †."

On the other hand, Richardſon draws his characters in the higheſt ſtrain of delicacy, though ſtill breathing and

* "He is the great maſter of *outrè*; the very prince of quaintneſs." G.

† Geneva.

inſpiring love. His deſcriptions are all exceedingly natural, ſimple, and tender, eſpecially of female characters; their words, their looks, their ſentiments, being all like to what we have ſeen, or imagine we have ſeen. Upon the whole, Richardſon is the more natural, the more agreeable, and the more virtuous noveliſt.

Rouſſeau's Emilius, as a Syſtem of Education, is, in general, abſurd and impracticable; yet it abounds in excellent ſentiments and many fine paſſages. His Treatiſe on the Inequality of mankind, has, perhaps, more originality of thought and argument than any of his pieces; yet as it recommends the ſavage ſtate as preferable to the ſocial, it ſavours too much of his uſual excentricity and wildneſs ‡.

His own "Confeſſions," lately publiſhed, are a plain demonſtration of his vanity and weakneſs. With all that candor and appearance of truth which they bear, they ſhow a degree of pride and preſumption, amidſt all the faults, failings, and even criminal habits which he aſcribes to himſelf, that ſeems totally inconſiſtent with a prudent, wiſe, or good man. Such, in my opinion, is the character of Rouſſeau.

I ſhall conclude, by obſerving one excuſe for Rouſſeau's looſe and ſceptical principles; in the atheiſtical turn of the French philoſophers of late years, and the general diſſipation of the nation, which has, indeed, gone beyond all bounds.

It was long ſince the French philoſophers were blinded by the ſpecious, though wild epicuriſm of Gaſſendus, who may be ſaid to be among the firſt of eminence who introduced atheiſm into France: It hath ſince ſpread, like a contagion, over the whole nation, and infected all ranks to a degree that is aſtoniſhing.

Thus concludes the account of French Literature, and of French writers. Many more diſtinguiſhed names might

‡ There is no doubt but Rouſſeau's writings on this ſubject, have contributed, in part, to the preſent confuſions and diſtractions in France.

have been added, ſuch as Rochefacault, Abbè de Bos, Trublet, Bellegarde, on the ſubject of manners, and criticiſm: Voltaire, Rollin, and Vertot, as hiſtorians: Buffon, the elegant French Linnæus: d' Alembert, eminent both in the walks of literature and philoſophy: Marmontel, Mad. de Genlis, and Le Mercier, eminent in the walks of humour and moral tales: beſides many others that can hardly be paralleled in any modern nation, if Great Britain alone be excepted.

It is to be lamented, indeed, that, from the late exceſſes and convulſions in France, Literature ſeems at preſent on the wane; and, indeed, runs the hazard of being totally extinguiſhed, from their mad ſyſtem of liberty and equality, which profeſſes to exclude the Arts, as well as Religion, from the Republic.

PART VII.

German Literature.

THE Germans have been generally reckoned too dull and phlegmatic a people to excel in literature; and therefore cannot figure much in our preſent ſubject; which is to take a view of the language and literature of the moſt enlightened nations in Europe.

Yet the Germans, though naturally of a phlegmatic temperament, are poſſeſſed of that ſolidity and perſeverance, and excel in all thoſe arts, that are general concomitants of ſuch a temperament. They are, and have always been, excellent mechanics and artiſts; good ſoldiers; good critics, commentators, and grammarians. And though polite learning has hitherto flouriſhed but indifferently among them, it is, perhaps, more owing to their detached kind of government, and the little encouragement given to literature by their proud nobles and princes, (who value nothing but rank and nobility), than to any other cauſe.

Learning, however, of late years, has begun to raiſe her head; and the German genius, from having the character of dull and cloudy, begins to brighten and ſhine in the world of letters. But firſt we ſpeak of the more ancient writers; and here we include Germany, Holland, and the Netherlands.

The invention of printing, and the firſt reformation in religion, gave glory to Germany, and ſhone with auſpicious luſtre on the intereſts of Learning. Liberality of ſentiment enſued, with freedom of inquiry on every ſubject.

Science and ancient literature went hand in hand: A ſpur was given to the improvement of the human mind, hitherto unknown in modern times: Editors, collators, and tranſcribers of ancient manuſcripts every where appeared; and numbers of the beſt claſſical books were publiſhed from the preſs, under the review and inſpection of the moſt learned, indefatigable, and accurate critics; and theſe were moſtly Germans. Although Germany produced nothing of her own; ſhe laboured, above all others, in the reſtoration of ancient Learning.

In this great and uſeful work, both as annotators, editors, and commentators, as well as critics and antiquarians, we have the diſtinguiſhed names of Lipſius, Voſſius, the two Scaligers, Stephanus Pighius, the two Stevens, &c. to whom we may add Grævius, Gronovius, Kuſter, &c. all particularly eminent as elucidators, and publiſhers of ancient authors; and as reſtorers of true and claſſical learning.

Melancton, too, cotemporary with Luther, and his coadjutor in the reformation, was eminent in diffuſing claſſical learning; and publicly read lectures at Heidelberg, (1512), on Virgil, Terence, Cicero, and Livy. His temper was mild and modeſt; and he was beloved by all parties for his moderation.

Above all, Eraſmus, who lived in the time of the reformation; was diſtinguiſhed, both for his works of uncommon wit and elegance, and alſo as an eminent encourager and reviver of the ancient literature. Like Buchanan, he wrote elegantly and fluently in Latin, and touched a variety of ſubjects; his humour is delicate and pleaſing in all. He ſeems to have been of moderate principles, as to religion; but his many ſatirical ſtrokes againſt the Romiſh clergy, plainly indicate his ſentiments in favour of the reformation.

His beſt pieces of humour are his Colloquies; which were formerly a ſchool-book; but now out of uſe, for what good reaſon I know not; and his "Praiſe of Folly," dedicated to Sir Thomas More, in which are many curious ludicrous prints, executed by Holbein, his friend and co-

temporary. Eraſmus's life is well written by Jortin. He was born at Rotterdam 1467, and died at Baſil, 1536. His works were publiſhed at Leyden, in ten volumes folio, under the care of M. Le Clerc.

The Germans and Dutch have either invented or improved the elegant and uſeful arts of printing and engraving, where they have to boaſt of the names of Albert Durer, Hollar, Elzivir, Eidelinck, &c. They have alſo acquired conſiderable renown in the medical world, by the eminent diſcoveries and improvements of Hoffman, Haller, Boerhave, Van Sweten, and Gobius. In philoſophy, Leibnitz, and Wolfius; and in the ſublime ſcience of aſtronomy, the illuſtrious names of Kepler, Euler, and Herſchel, will ſtand on immortal record.

Hugo Grotius was a poet, philoſopher, and an eminent civilian. His treatiſe "De Jure Belli et Pacis," is a great work, equally learned, ingenious, and profound; and his book on the "Truth of the Chriſtian religion," ſhows him a friend to religion, and virtue, as well as a man of ſolid learning.

As moſt of the German writers we have hitherto mentioned, wrote in Latin, which was the language in faſhion among the learned in thoſe days; we now come to ſpeak of German Literature, properly ſo called, by which we mean thoſe performances that have appeared lately, and for the firſt time, in that language, and rank under the deſcription of polite learning, or the Belles Lettres.

Germany is ſaid to have been indebted for the firſt dawn of good taſte to the French, and more eſpecially to a colony of that nation which fled from perſecution, and found an aſylum in the territories of the electors of Brandenburg.

This colony, (ſays a writer of that country,) poliſhed the rough Germans by the elegance of their manners, the beauty and harmony of their language, and the maſterly productions of their poets, orators, and hiſtorians, which were ſuperior to any thing the Germans had yet ſeen. This excited their emulation; although for ſome time their progreſs in literature was retarded by the importation of French elo-

quence. The German language, though naturally rough and intractable, then moulded itſelf; and now daily moulds itſelf more and more to harmony and grace; and is poſſeſſed of many beauties peculiar to itſelf.

The epoch of German Literature commenced at the memorable point of time when Frederic II. aſcended the throne of Pruſſia, and it is certain, that ſince his time, letters and ſcience have made a conſiderable and rapid progreſs. We inſtance, as a proof of this, the Poems of Haller, the Meſſiah of Klopſtock, the Idyls and the Death of Abel of Geſner, the Romances of Wieland, the Fables and moral writings of Gellert, the elegant and witty productions of Leſſing, Lichtwer, Engil, and Cramer; together with the philoſophical writings of Sulzer, the Jew Mendelſon, and Garvè; which would do honour to any nation in Europe.

The Germans, in public-ſpeaking or pulpit-eloquence, are as yet behind both the Engliſh and French: they have no Maſſilons, nor Bourdaloues; Atterburies, nor Blairs; their principal excellence is ſolidity, perſpicuity, and ſound reaſoning; but without the ſtyle of eloquence.

Their principal dramatic writers are Engil, Leſſing, and Leiſewitz, whoſe compoſitions are juſt now in great vogue. Their manner is thought to be deeply tragical; rather ſtiff and pompous; their characters too little diverſified; and their plots often improbable. Mr. Mackenzie, member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, has lately illuſtrated this ſubject to great advantage in an ingenious eſſay publiſhed in the tranſactions of that Society, where his remarks on the German theatre are particularly worthy of notice.

The Germans have of late become as vain of their literature, as they are of pomp and titles. Every gentleman aſſumes the name of baron; and every man of letters publiſhes, and takes the name of author.

But in regard to their literature we may obſerve, in general, that it is to be conſidered as yet in its nonage; ſince the rude efforts made in the ſpace of little more than forty years cannot be ſuppoſed to have brought it to any great degree of perfection or ſtability.

As to Geſner and Klopſtock, whoſe works have been tranſlated into our language, we preſume, that beſides the objection of their uſing an unbounded freedom of metamorphoſing the moſt ſerious and ſacred facts of ſcripture into fable and long-extended works of imagination; they are faulty for their ſtyle, (eſpecially in the Death of Abel of the former, and the Meſſiah of the latter,) which partakes too much of bombaſt, and is by far too prolix and verboſe to pleaſe a juſt taſte.

The Sorrows of Werter, by Gothèe, is another piece of objectionable merit, and if not equally bombaſt in the ſtyle, is at leaſt equally romantic and unnatural in the ſentiment.

We confeſs, however, that Geſner's Idyls may be excepted from the above cenſure; particularly on account of their ſimplicity and excellent moral turn. The manners and innocent lives of ſhepherds, are deſcribed in them with ſingular juſtneſs and delicacy; and may be read, eſpecially by the youth of the female ſex, with much pleaſure and improvement. I have ſeen a French tranſlation of them executed with great elegance.

PART VIII.

Engliſh Literature.

SECTION I.

Of the Origin of Engliſh Literature.

HOW much does Literature owe the divine Art of Poetry! —In every age and nation has ſhe not led the way to the ornamental as well as to the uſeful arts? Among the venerable ancients have we not ſeen her the forerunner of every improvement both in language and ſcience? Hiſtory, eloquence, and philoſophy all followed in her train; they borrowed from her, and perhaps, in their turn, lent her ſome ſhare of their graces.

Juſt ſo in England, whither the Muſes had ſteered their flight in the 13th aud 14th centuries, after having accompliſhed the tour of moſt countries in Europe; Literature originally aroſe from ſome rude eſſays in poetry, which being gradually improved, were the means of introducing, firſt, language and a taſte in compoſition, and afterwards the ſciences and arts in higher perfectiou.

Even Alfred the Great, as well as Richard I, among the earlieſt and moſt diſtinguiſhed of our kings; were both muſicians and poets. The former, in particular, was a great encourager of learning, as well as an excellent pattern of every virtue.

In fine, after various and not unſucceſsful efforts to nurſe and lift the Engliſh muſe from the ground, (her pinions being as yet unſteady and wanting vigour,) at laſt, having

attained her ſtrength, ſhe was taught to ſoar with aſſured wing, a ſtrong and lofty flight in the truly original ſtrains of a Chaucer and a Spencer; of whom we now come to ſpeak.

SECTION II.

Of the Age of Chaucer and Spenſer; and of their reſpective Characters.

CHAUCER was born 1328, in the reign of Edward the third. He was particularly patronized by John duke of Lancaſter, who, favouring the reformation under Wickliff, firſt encouraged our author to write againſt the Romiſh clergy, whoſe ambition and vices, joined to the groſſeſt ignorance, had arrived to an enormous height.

He died in his 72d year; after having lived ſometimes in depreſt circumſtances, and ſometimes in proſperity. He was the author of the Canterbury Tales, and other works of excellent humour. But he had an equal turn for the higher ſpecies of poetry; being a ſun of literature, a genius of the firſt rank, capable of various exertions, and juſtly entitled the father of Engliſh verſe; for though his numbers are rude, and his ſtyle now obſolete, we may ſtill diſcern that his ſenſe is ſtrong, and his wit genuine.

Both Chaucer and Spenſer had formed themſelves on the Italian poets, whoſe talent ſometimes inclined to wit and humour; and ſometimes indulged in a ſerious and ſublime enthuſiaſm.

Indeed, to both of theſe poets the Engliſh language has been much indebted; but as Spenſer who lived later, (being born 1553), leaned wholly to romance, chivalry, and the more ſublime poetry; hence the ſuperior excellence of his language and harmony, which rank him with our greateſt poets, and entitle him to the rare character of true and ſuperior genius.

Tenderneſs and generoſity in the extreme; romantic love; a conſtant vein of humanity that does honour to human nature; high ſtrokes of ſublime and enchanting deſcription, all tend to mark out and diſtinguiſh this great and amiable poet.

His Fairy Queen is his principal work, and affords many ſtriking inſtances of the above character. It is founded on the prevailing ſyſtem of enchantment, demoniſm, and chivalry, that gained ſo much credit in thoſe days; and its moral is entirely virtuous. Yet, we preſume, that to one who has been much converſant with Taſſo, Arioſto, and others the beſt Italian poets, the ſtrains of Spenſer may ſeem inferior. The veil of allegory, with which his Fairy Queen is covered appears too thin and flimſy, to impoſe with conſtant pleaſure on the imagination. And though there is vaſt invention diſplayed in his imagery, and abundance of variety in his allegory; yet the perpetual obtruſion of enchanted foreſts, diſtreſt damſels, knights-errant, giants, demons, dragons, and wizards, has too much of ſameneſs upon the whole; neither does it atone for the ſimplicity of the moral that lies hid below, which the judgment too eaſily diſcovers and thinks too jejune and bare to require ſuch a parade of wild deſcription.

Spenſer, though ſometimes patronized by the great, died in the year 1599, in extreme poverty. He was buried in Weſtminſter-Abbey, according to his requeſt, near Chaucer. He ſeems, like other poets, to have had an amiable diſpoſition, a feeling heart, and, upon the whole, an unproſperous life; yet he was patronized by Sir Philip Sidney, the Earl of Southampton, and Queen Eliſabeth herſelf, who made him poet-laureat.

Phineas Fletcher flouriſhed in this period. I have ſeen his Piſcatory Eclogues; the plan is borrowed from Sanazarius: but the verſe, much like Spenſer's, is variable, ſmooth, tender, and deſcriptive. It is, however, too much tinctured with that falſe kind of wit and antitheſes, ſo much in vogue among the inferior Italian poets.

SECTION III.

Of the Origin of the Engliſh Drama.

THEATRICAL repreſentations in England are thought to be as old as William the Conquerer: Even, in the reigns of Henry and Richard the Second, pieces both ſerious and comic are ſaid to have been acted. The firſt pieces, however, were of a religious nature; and, in the dark ages preceding the Reformation, were exhibited in churches by the prieſts, in order to excite and increaſe ſuperſtitious devotion in the people.

And as we before obſerved that the antient tragedy and comedy, among the Greeks and Romans, took their riſe from the Bacchanalia and religious ceremonies; ſo in Britain, as well as in Spain and Italy, and other parts of Europe, the dramatic art, by the beſt accounts, owed its riſe to thoſe religious and ſcenical exhibitions, which, in England, went under the name of the Myſteries, repreſenting the incarnation, paſſion, crucifixion, reſurrection, and miracles of our Saviour, with various other paſſages of the Old and New Teſtament.

Theſe holy ſcenes were at firſt exhibited only in dumb ſhow, or at leaſt with extremely little ſpeech or dialogue; yet, rude as they were, the plot and fable were implicitly followed. Sometimes the virtues, vices, affections and moral faculties were perſonified and introduced among the *Dramatis Perſonæ*.

And this practice gave riſe to a more improved and rational ſpecies of the drama, compoſed entirely of thoſe perſonifications. Theſe obtained the name of Moralities; and in them were exhibited the firſt faint eſſays of art and deſign, together with manner and character; which, however im-

perfectly formed, ſerved as a dawn to that day which the genius of Shakeſpear effulged on the Britiſh ſtage *.

Even before the time of Shakeſpear, flouriſhed ſeveral Dramatic writers of ſome eminence, ſuch as Bale, Heywood, and Lylly, who wrote in the reigns of Henry the VIII, Edward the VI, Mary, and Elizabeth. In 1561 appeared Gordobuck, written by Lord Buckhurſt and Thomas Norton Eſq; a piece much applauded by the beſt critics both of this and the former age.

To the firſt of theſe authors we are indebted for that poetical chronicle, entitled the Mirror for Magiſtrates: "And our hiſtoric plays," ſays Mr. Walpole in his catalogue of Noble Authors, "are allowed to have been founded on the heroic narratives in that work."—Maſſinger, alſo deſerves notice among our early dramatic writers of merit. See a late edition of his plays dedicated to Garrick.

SECTION IV.

Of Engliſh Dramatic Authors.

SHAKESPEAR, the ſon of a woolcomber, was born at Stratford upon Avon 1564. On account of ſome miſdemeanors, he was obliged to leave his native home, and fly to London early in life; but fortunate and auſpicious was this flight to literature; the world might elſe have been deprived of the greateſt prodigy of Dramatic genius it had ever produced.

Approaching the theatre, which, at that time was in a rude ſtate, he raiſed himſelf to notice by his native abilities, without a ſingle patron. At firſt, indeed, being poor, he diſtinguiſhed himſelf only as groom to the play-houſe; but

* See an Eſſay on the origin and progreſs of the Engliſh ſtage; as alſo Dr. Percy's ingenious remarks, in his "Reliques of Engliſh Poetry," as to the origin of the Engliſh Drama.

ſoon after, beginning to write plays, he felt his own genius, and diſplayed ſuch excellence as ſtands unrivalled to this day: "Nil ortum tale, nec oriturum †!"

He is chiefly remarkable for his vaſt invention, his ſagacity and penetration of human nature, his native delineation of character, and ſtrength and power of diction; though mixed ſometimes with quaint thought, and hyperbolic expreſſion.

Ben Johnſon, his cotemporary, and ſuperior in learning, falls below him in other reſpects. His ſtyle is nervous and correct, indeed; and he particularly excels in humour. Witneſs his Volpone, Alchymiſt, Silent Woman, and Every Man in his Humour, which ſtill keep poſſeſſion of the ſtage, and are among the very beſt of our plays, ancient or modern. Ben's temper was of the ſevere kind; which is viſible in his writings. He was too proud of his learning, and intermixed too much of it in ſome of his pieces. His Cataline is almoſt a literal tranſlation from Salluſt, put into verſe; but he had no genius for tragedy.

Beaumont and Fletcher, who wrote in conjunction, have more ſweetneſs of ſtyle than Johnſon, though leſs of ſtrength and nature than Shakeſpeare, whom they imitate. However, they deſcribe the manners of gentlemen with a pleaſing and juſt reſemblance, and with a good deal of wit and humour: their language is chaſte, flowing, and elegant, and abounds in may pathetic paſſages. The only objection againſt them is, that they are not ſo happy as could be wiſhed, in the conduct of their plots; and ſome of their characters ſeem abſurd, extravagant, and too much out of nature. See their King and No King.

Next, in point of merit, among our old play-writers, comes Otway, who, for tender and moving ſcenes of tragedy, is hardly to be equalled. Lee ſoars too much in the regions of bombaſt; and Southern debaſes his beſt ſcenes with ribaldry and low wit: but Otway is generally natural, pathetic, and tragical.

† Horace.

Rowe, though a profeſſed imitator of Shakeſpeare, is feeble in compariſon, and his verſe too monotonous.

If we except thoſe juſt now deſcribed, our ſtage, I am afraid, has little of which it can boaſt. Our modern tragedies are ſtrangers both to nature and paſſion; and are diſtinguiſhed for nothing but a certain idle pomp of language that may ſtrike the ear, but can never reach the heart. "We muſt except Mr. Hume's Douglas." G.

As for good Comedies, we are as much at a loſs; excepting a few of Sheridan's, ſome of Farquhar's, Foot's Minor, and the peculiar humour of his careleſs farcical pieces.

Upon the whole, our Britiſh hemiſphere of Dramatic poetry, is at preſent dark, or ſhines only with the falſe and meteor-like gleam of affected wit, or rather quaintneſs; and is ſeldom or never illumined with any new rays of native genius, except ſuch as are lighted up and borrowed from thoſe maſters of the drama, thoſe venerable old fathers of the ſtage before-mentioned. For which reaſon there is nothing we can commend more than the revival of good old plays; and the late republication of thoſe by Beaumont and Fletcher does honour to the taſte of the editors. Next to Shakeſpear's and Johnſon's, they are the ornament of our language and glory of our ſtage. The Play called Philaſtor as reformed by Colman, merits the higheſt praiſe.

"Indeed, during the reign of Charles II, ſeveral comic "writers flouriſhed, who ſtill maintain no undeſerved re- "putation, particularly Etheridge, Wycherly, Vanburgh; "to whom we may add their ſucceſſors, Dryden, Cibber, "Congreve, Centlivre: But they were all too much taint- "ed with the ignominious depravities of that age, inter- "mixed with pleaſantry. Their wit and language are too "laboured, and their characters too artificial. They de- "parted from what the author of the Rehearſal, ſignifi- "cantly calls the "Plain old way of wit;" and they "loſt the eaſy, the natural humour and character of the "old poets.

" There are two ſingular modern productions of genius; " the Rehearſal, and Beggar's Opera; often imitated with- " out ſucceſs, or even the merit of any reſemblance." G.

SECTION V.

Of Cowley, Waller, and their Cotemporaries.

WALLER, conſidering the age in which he lived, is excellent, both for his language and numbers. His expreſſions are ſometimes a little flat, but they are as often ſtrong and poetical; and there are many inſtances in him, both of the beautiful and ſublime.

In general, it may be obſerved of Waller, as well as of Cowley, and ſome others of the poets of that age, that they abound in wit and lively alluſions; but want ſimplicity and tenderneſs, even though they write upon love, the moſt tender of all ſubjects.

Cowley, 'tis true, was more learned, more deep, and philoſophical than Waller; but he evidently writes not to the heart. He has too much wit to be tender; even though he writes many elegies and ſonnets upon the death of learned and worthy perſons.

In a word, witticiſms, conceits, antitheſes, and a continual play upon words, ſeem to have infected the writers of this age, from the higheſt to the loweſt; which is not to be wondered at, conſidering the encouragement given to this falſe kind of wit at the court of Charles II.

On the other hand, Butler, their cotemporary, whoſe profeſſed object was wit, is an admirable genius that teems with humour; and yet never overdoes or overloads his ſubject with too much. He is even deeply learned, and borrows his alluſions, both from nature and art, with wonderful facility, and without pedantry. His reading like Shakeſpear's, is immenſe; his judgment equal to his wit; and

even his language valuable for purity and ſimplicity. Hence, the propriety of his ranking in the Hiſtory of Literature; as his expreſſion, which is copious and juſt, ſhows what our language was in his age, and in that particular department in which he choſe to walk.—I return to Waller.

Waller, in his genius and temper, bears much the character of Anacreon; at leaſt if we are to judge from the greater part of his writings. His countenance, indeed, (in the prints we have of him), indicates gravity, and poſſibly he might have had a ſhare of it in his diſpoſition; ſince, in his poems, we find him ſometimes ſerious, and even not ſeldom religious.

Yet, notwithſtanding this, he muſt have had an amorous temper, and turn for gallantry, much akin to Anacreon. Eaſy, indolent, and an Epicurean by principle; he profeſſed to make the moſt of pleaſure from every quarter; but without launching into exceſs or debauchery; which was, likewiſe, the principles of St. Evremond his friend and cotemporary.

Hence, Waller, in his poems, writes of love with that kind of ſentiment without tenderneſs, which ſeems ſo natural to Anacreon. Nothing can be more eaſy and elegant than the wit of Anacreon; nothing more natural than the flow of his verſes. But as he was of a temper ſprightly and jovial, ſtill further enlivened by the exhilarating juice of the beſt wines, and probably enjoyed miſtreſſes of yielding diſpoſitions, and eaſy virtue; ſo, in his verſes, we find a perpetual ſerenity and gaiety; no amorous complainings, no tender tears for* "ſlighted vows, or love's diſdain;" in fine, none of thoſe moving or tender expreſſions of the heart that almoſt conſtantly are uttered by the paſſion of love, when it takes place in a delicate or feeling ſoul.

The following lines are among the tendereſt in Waller:

"Oh how I long my careleſs limbs to lay
Under the plantane's ſhade; and all the day

* Akenſide.

With amorous airs my fancy entertain;
Invoke the Muſes, and improve my vein!
No paſſion there, in my free breaſt ſhould move,
None but the ſweet, and beſt of paſſions, love.
There, while I ſing, if gentle love be by,
That tunes my lute, and winds the ſtrings ſo high;
With the ſweet ſound of Sachariſſa's name,
I'll make the liſtening ſavages grow tame."

That Waller had a mind ſuſceptible of religion, as well as love, may be ſeen by his long poem on Divine Love, in ſix Cantos; prefixed to which, as a motto, he uſes the following lines from Lucretius, after changing ſome words in order to adapt them to his purpoſe.

" Floriferis ut apes in ſaltibus omnia libant,
Sic nos Scripturæ depaſcimur aurea dicta;
Aurea, perpetua ſemper digniſſima vita!
Nam Divinus Amor cum cæpit vociferari,
Diffugiunt animi terrores." *Lucr.* lib. 3.

It is more than probable that Waller wrote his religious poem, after he had been expelled the Houſe of Commons, and had retired from all public buſineſs.

It may be obſerved, further, in Waller's praiſe, that notwithſtanding the amorous turn of moſt of his poems, yet in none of them, not even the moſt juvenile, do we find any thing that borders on indelicacy or licentiouſneſs; no obſcenity, no ſmutty alluſion; which is much to be wondered at, conſidering the general diſſoluteneſs of that age. There is an epigram, indeed, in which there is a little of the *double entendre;* I mean the epigram upon a young lady married to an old man; but, conſidering the poignancy of its wit, and the nature of the ſubject, the implication, or allegory, is very excuſable.

The above obſervation holds likewiſe true, in regard to Cowley, who, in his youth, wrote may love-verſes, but all in a chaſte and delicate ſtrain.

The ſubſequent verſes of Waller, upon the death of Cromwell, are ſublime; though it muſt, at the ſame time, be confeſſed that they have too much a daſh of conceit, the common fault of the times.

"We muſt reſign! heaven his great ſoul does claim
In ſtorms, as loud as his immortal fame;
His dying groans, his laſt breath ſhakes our iſle,
And trees uncut, fall for his funeral pile:
Nature herſelf, took notice of his death,
And ſighing, ſwell'd the ſea with ſuch a breath,
That, to remoteſt ſhores her billows rowl'd,
Th' approaching fate of their great ruler told."

The following thought, by Cowley, in his Ode upon the death of Mr. William Harvey, is an inſtance of ſublimity.

"So ſtrong a Wit did nature to him frame,
As all things but his Judgment overcame;
His Judgment like the heavenly Moon did ſhow,
Tempering that mighty ſea below!"

The following ſimile upon the uſe of Reaſon, in divine matters, is alſo poetical; though, we muſt ſay, it is rather too witty, and ſparkles too much with conceits, his uſual fault.

"The holy Book, like the eighth ſphere does ſhine,
With thouſand lights of truth divine.
So numberleſs the ſtars, that to the eye
It makes but all one galaxy.
Yet reaſon muſt aſſiſt too; for in ſeas,
So vaſt and dangerous as theſe,
Our courſe by *ſtars above* we cannot know,
Without the *compaſs* too below."

One great fault in Cowley, beſides his affectation of wit, is the harſhneſs of his numbers; and yet there are many inſtances that contradict this remark, which muſt not be ex-

tended to all his poetry. The following verſes ſpoken by the God of Love upon the death of Anacreon, are as muſical lines as ever were written:

" All thy verſe is ſofter far,
Than the downy feathers are
Of my wings and of my arrows,
Of my mother's doves and ſparrows;
Sweet as lovers freſheſt kiſſes,
Or their riper following bliſſes;
Graceful, cleanly, ſmooth, and round,
All with Venus' girdle bound;
And thy life was all the while,
Kind and gentle as thy ſtyle."

So are the following, ſpeaking of the judgment-day:

" Then all the wide-extended ſky,
And all th' harmonious worlds on high,
And Virgil's ſacred work ſhall die."

Upon the whole, this was the age of witticiſm, antitheſis, and metaphyſical poetry, derived from the French or loweſt Italian ſchools; when imagination called to her ſtandard all thoſe ideal beings which wit and intellect ſupply, without reference to nature or the heart.

It was, moreover, the age of diſſipation, ribaldry, obſcene alluſion, and low humour; of pleaſure without ſentiment, and love without tenderneſs. The king debauched the court, and the court the country.

Even in the pulpit, witticiſm and conceit prevailed. But on the ſtage, diſſipation and wit went hand in hand. Dryden, in his plays, was equally remarkable for his looſeneſs and elegance. Vanburgh and Wycherly wrote from the times, and ſometimes from nature; but it was nature naked and wanton, and deſtitute of delicacy. Several novels, written about this period, incur the ſame cenſure.

MILTON.

We cannot properly ſay that Milton was a poet of the age of Charles II. He flouriſhed and eſtabliſhed his character and fame before that woeful period of our hiſtory.—His ſuperior mind and genius were utterly adverſe to theſe times. He elevated the Engliſh muſe far above the taſte of that graceleſs monarch and his graceleſs courtiers: viz. to ennoble virtue, adorn religion, and improve and delight the mind, by ſome of the nobleſt exertions of genius that ever the world beheld.

Indeed, he is ſo different from all our poets, that he ſeems to form an epoch by himſelf. He equally drew his reſources from the ancients and the beſt Italian poets: and he ſeems to equal, if not outſtrip them all, (Homer alone excepted,) for the ſublime powers of genius, judgment, and learning.

What is ſurpriſing in his principal poem, (the Paradiſe Loſt,) is, that inſtead of ſinking, like other poets, into the ſhackles of rhyme, which ſeems natural, indeed, in languages of Gothic origin; he, all at once, aſſumes the free and manly ſpirit of the ancients, by the adoption of blank verſe, and ſucceeds in it accordingly.

Milton was born, December 9, 1608; being deſcended of a family of that name near Abingdon in Oxfordſhire.—He was educated at St. Paul's ſchool, where he made, by his unwearied application, extraordinary progreſs in learning.

From his 12th year he generally ſat up all night at his ſtudies, which, accompanied with frequent headachs, proved extremely prejudicial to his eyes. In 1625 he was entered into Chriſt's College, Cambridge, where, in 1632, having taken his degree of Maſter of Arts, he retired to Colebrook in Buckinghamſhire, and wrote his Maſk of Comus, 1634.

In 1637, he publiſhed his Lycidas. In this excellent poem he laments the death of his friend Edward King, who was drowned, in his paſſage from Cheſter, on the Iriſh Seas.

Upon the death of his mother, having obtained leave of his father to travel, he ſet out, accompanied only with one

man, who attended him through all his tour. At Paris he was introduced to the famous Hugo Grotius; and thence went to Florence, Rome, and Naples; at all which places he was courteouſly entertained by perſons of the firſt diſtinction.

At Naples he made himſelf known to Giovanni Baptiſta Manſo, Marquis of Villa, a great patron of learning and of the liberal arts; and to whom Taſſo addreſſes his Dialogue on Friendſhip. This nobleman honoured Milton with particular eſteem. And he, in return, preſented the Marquis his eclogue entitled Manſus, which deſerves notice among his Latin poems. After an abſence of fifteen months, he returned to his native country, which he found diſtracted both with civil and religious contentions.

Upon this occaſion Milton wrote ſeveral tracts on church government and religious liberty, which ſhow him to have been a man of a bold and free ſpirit, and of the moſt generous and liberal ſentiments.

In 1645 his Juvenile Poems were printed at London, among which the L' Allegro and Il Penſeroſo were the beſt. Like Lycidas and Comus, they are indeed excellent in their kind; and were ſufficient to have immortalized any author. The ſweeteſt harmony, the nobleſt deſcription, and the fineſt morality, inſpire the Comus; the moſt exquiſite Doric delicacy and pathos the Lycidas. And the L' Allegro and Il Penſeroſo abound in every excellence of the beſt and moſt perfect poetry.

He was ſoon after admitted into the ſervice of the Commonwealth, and made Latin ſecretary to the council of ſtate. In 1651, he publiſhed his Pro Populo Anglicano Defenſio; for which he was rewarded with a thouſand pounds: "it is written with elegance, and in the ſpirit of a bold and zealous republican." G.

He had now married a ſecond wife, but not before he had been deprived of his ſight for two years. It is obſervable that as to his wives he kept up an auſtere and ſtern manner; either, becauſe naturally he was not much affected with

female endearments; or, which is more probable, becauſe his ſublime genius, intent on grave and ſevere ſtudies, found little enjoyment in thoſe blandiſhments that peculiarly belong to love, and ſo much conciliate the affection of women. And Milton himſelf inſinuates as much in one of his Latin Elegies, where he tells us that he had conquered love at an early period; by application to ſtudy, and an entire devotion to the Muſes.

He was ſtill a moſt laborious writer; eſpecially in civil and religious controverſy. His conſtitution ſeems to have been naturally ſtrong, and capable of great application. He now publiſhed his Defenſio Secunda, after which he aſſiduouſly applied himſelf to his own ſtudies and private deſigns; particularly his hiſtory of Britain, and his new Theſaurus Linguæ Latinæ, according to the method of Robert Stevens.—At intervals, too, in his own houſe, he taught the ſtudious youth, polite letters; eſpecially the Greek and Roman claſſics, to whom he had always the warmeſt attachment. See his Tractate on Education.

Soon after the Reſtoration he was offered the place of Latin ſecretary to the king, which, notwithſtanding the importunity of his wife, he refuſed; and when ſhe preſſed him to comply with the times and accept the king's offer, he made anſwer: "You are in the right, my dear; you, like "other women, would ride in your coach; for me, my "aim is to live and die like an honeſt man."

Soon after his marriage with his third wife, he removed to a houſe in the Artillery-Walk, where he continued till his death. 'Twas here his Paradiſe Loſt was finiſhed, although begun long before and continued at intervals; but not publiſhed till 1667. The ſubject of this poem he had firſt deſigned for a tragedy, and Philips ſays he had ſhowed to him, and ſome others, that paſſage in the 4th book, for its beginning, which runs thus, "and is a choice morſel of the "Paradiſe Loſt:" G.

"Oh! Thou that with ſurpaſſing glory crown'd, &c."

But that he afterwards altered his intention, and turned it into the grand Epic work which we now find it.

After it was ready for the preſs, it was near being ſuppreſſed by the ignorance or malice of the licenſer, who, among other trivial objections, imagined there was treaſon in that noble ſimile, book 1. v. 574.

" As when the ſun new ris'n
Looks thro' the horizontal miſty air,
Shorn of his beams; or from behind the moon,
In dim eclipſe, diſaſtrous twilight ſheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs."

But what is ſtill more remarkable, and indeed a diſgrace upon that inglorious age, he was obliged to diſpoſe of this work to a bookſeller for the trifling ſum of fifteen pounds. Under ſuch prejudices did he then labour; principally owing no doubt to his free republican principles, which were diametrically oppoſite to the then government both of church and ſtate.

In 1671, Milton publiſhed, at London, in 8vo, Paradiſe Regained, a poem in four books, to which is added Sampſon Agoniſtes. There is no greater proof of human weakneſs, even in its moſt exalted ſtate, than the author's preferring his Paradiſe Regained to Paradiſe Loſt.

It is, however, juſtly remarked by Biſhop Newton, that Milton may be ſeen in Paradiſe Regained as well as Paradiſe Loſt. If it is inferior in poetry, it is not ſo in ſentiment; if it is leſs deſcriptive, it is more argumentative; if it does not ſometimes riſe ſo high, neither doth it ſink below; and it has not met with the approbation it deſerves, only becauſe it has not been read and conſiderd ſufficiently by thoſe who are capable of judging.

This great man died at his houſe in Bunhil, November 15, 1674.——Mr. Fenton has given us the following deſcription of his perſon. " He was of a moderate ſize, well-proportioned, and of a ruddy complexion, light-brown

hair, and handſome features; yet his eyes were none of the quickeſt. When he was a ſtudent at Cambridge, he was ſo fair and clear, that many called him the Lady of Chriſt's College. His deportment was affable, and his gait erect and manly; beſpeaking courage and undauntedneſs. While he had his ſight, he wore a ſword, and was well ſkilled in uſing it. He had a delicate tuneable voice, an excellent ear, could play on the organ, and bear a part in vocal and inſtrumental muſic."

Of all poets Milton appears to me to ſpeak the moſt feelingly of muſic. Gray obſerves this of him in his Ode on the Inſtallation of the Duke of Grafton. Beſides ſeveral inſtances in Paradiſe Loſt, I inſtance theſe from Comus.

" Can any mortal mixture of earth's mold
Breathe ſuch divine enchanting raviſhment?
Sure ſomething holy lodges in that breaſt,
And with theſe raptures moves the vocal air
To teſtify his hidden reſidence.
How ſweetly did they float upon the wings
Of ſilence, thro' the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall ſmoothing the raven downe
Of darkneſs till it ſmil'd: I have heard
My mother Circe with the Syrens three,
Amid the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs, and baleful drugs,
Who, as they ſung, would take the priſon'd ſoul,
And lap it in Elyſium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking dogs into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd ſoft applauſe.
———His artleſs ſtrains have oft delay'd
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And ſweeten'd every muſkroſe of the dale."

" There is no paſſage in Engliſh poetry which, in my " opinion, can be compared to this fine enthuſiaſm on the " power of muſic, but ſome lines from the other ſuperlative " poet Shakeſpear." G.

And they are as follow:

" That ſtrain again; it had a dying fall;
O! —it came o'er my ear like the ſweet ſouth,
Breathing upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odours." *Twelfth Night.*

" The man that hath no muſic in himſelf,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of ſweet ſounds,
Is fit for treaſons, ſtratagems, and ſpoils;
The motions of his ſpirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no ſuch man be truſted." *Merchant of Venice.*

To return to Milton: his beauties are ſo numerous and important, that it would be tedious to mention them; eſpecially as Addiſon has already, to ſuch good purpoſe, deſcribed them in his excellent criticiſms on Paradiſe Loſt.

From this laſt poem, out of numberleſs ones, I ſhall only give two inſtances of the Sublime, which is deemed his principal talent. The firſt has a daſh of the terrible.

" So ſpoke the Son; and into terror chang'd
His countenance too ſevere to be beheld,
And full of wrath bent on his enemies.
At once the four outſpread their ſtarry wings
With dreadful ſhade contiguous, and the orbs
Of his fierce chariot roll'd, as with the ſound
Of torrent-floods, or of a numerous hoſt.
He on his impious foes right onward drove,
Gloomy as night; under his burning wheels
The ſtedfaſt empyrean ſhook throughout;
All but the throne itſelf of God."

The imagination of Milton naturally and uniformly great, is, in the above deſcription, well ſupported by the exalted imagery borrowed from Ezekiel.

The majeſty of counſel was never deſcribed in loftier terms than the following, by our author:

" ———————With grave
Aſpect he roſe, and in his riſing ſeem'd
A pillar of ſtate: deep on his front engrav'n
Deliberation ſat and public care;
And princely counſel in his face yet ſhone
Majeſtic though in ruin: ſage he ſtood
With Atlantean ſhoulders fit to bear
The weight of mightieſt monarchies; his look
Drew audience and attention ſtill as night,
Or ſummer's noontide air, while thus he ſpake."

Other remarks on Milton will be found in my compariſon of Milton with Homer; as alſo in the beautiful paſſages of Engliſh poetry.

I ſhall only, here, further obſerve, that it is ſurpriſing to hear not only Johnſon, but even Dryden, complaining of the harſhneſs of Milton's language. The contrary appears to me ſo evident, that, for richneſs of harmony, variety and pomp of poetical diction, he is not ſurpaſt by any author in any language; and in our own he excels all others. The characteriſtic of Shakeſpeare's language is ſtrength and nervouſneſs; but it wants the uniform dignity of Milton, who, as he had formed himſelf upon the ancients, partook of their manner, eſpecially Homer's; who, in continued powers of language and thought, ſurpaſſes all others.

SECTION VI.

Of Dryden, Pope, and Young.

DRYDEN was born 1631; and died 1701; ſo that he was juſt ſeen by Pope, as Milton was by Dryden, when a boy.

It looks a little ſurpriſing, that Dryden, being a poet, ſhould compoſe nothing till he was paſt thirty; but it is not

ſo ſurpriſing that he continued writing till at a very advanced age with much the ſame vigour and faculties unimpaired. The one fact accounts for the other.

It is ſaid that he was even dull at ſchool. This has been obſerved of other men of genius, Swift, for inſtance; and it might partly happen from their ſtudies not ſuiting their taſte, and partly from their taking time to collect their ideas, and improve their genius, which afterwards, on meeting with encouragement, would, like a ſmothered flame let looſe, ſhine forth all at once with unexpected ſplendor.

Gray did not write his church-yard Elegy, though among his firſt and beſt pieces, till the period when Dryden began to write. The emperor Charles V, and Lewis XIV, unfolded not their powers for government, or rage for conqueſt, till their years were fully matured; neither did Julius Cæſar, a much greater genius than either of them, feel his mind rouzed to great actions, till about thirty years of age, when, ſerving in Spain, he obſerved a ſtatue of Alexander the Great, which made him weep and regret that he had done nothing worthy of renown, at an age when that hero had conquered the world.

Dryden, of all Engliſh poets, abounds moſt in alluſions to Scripture. The reaſon may be, that, in his time, religion was more a ſubject of controverſy, than at any other period; and as the diſputes then ran high between epiſcopacy and puritaniſm, it was neceſſary for both parties to ſtudy the Scriptures, in order to furniſh themſelves with arguments to maintain their different doctrines.

That Dryden, notwithſtanding his licentious life, was deſirous to be thought a ſound believer, appears from many of his writings. His Religio Laici contains a ſyſtem of faith, as orthodox as any divine could deſire.

Compared to Pope, Dryden's ſtyle of writing, though leſs brilliant, is often more ſignificant, and generally more pure and ſimple; and is free of that quaintneſs which the latter falls into on many occaſions. Such as:

"Pains the ſage ear, and hurts the ſober eye.
Rage gnaw'd his lips, and wonder chain'd his tongue."

Dryden, in lyric harmony and vivacity, is, likewiſe, ſuperior to Pope. His Alexander's Feaſt far excels his rival's imitation; and he poſſeſſes another merit of no contemptible kind, that hardly one of all our bards is equal to him in the conſtruction of a roundelay or love-ſong. His compoſitions in this way breathe a native eaſe and ſpirit peculiar to themſelves.

In his Fables and Tales he is excellent; for, beſides their purity and harmony, they poſſeſs a natural and eaſy vein of humour highly characteriſtic of the ſubject; yet they have been imitated by Pope, in his January and May, and Wife of Bath; with good ſucceſs.

Dryden's main excellencies, therefore, are, purity and eaſe of expreſſion; harmony, vivacity, humour; his defects, want of ſublimity and pathos. In this view, compare his Virgil with Pope's Homer; and judge on which ſide the balance preponderates. I imagine on that of Pope.

It has been ſaid that Pope excels in expreſſing himſelf cloſely and in few words; which Shenſtone calls a faculty of condenſing or conſolidating his thoughts. I would call it a talent of ſaying things ſmartly; juſt as we ſee ſome men, of a lively turn, expreſs themſelves with briſkneſs and brevity on all ſubjects.

But Pope ſometimes expreſſes himſelf in a briſk and even petulant manner on ſubjects the moſt ſolemn; as a man that fully commands his ſubject, not ſtanding in awe of it; and ſpeaks in a manner approaching to preſumption.

EXAMPLES:

"Whatever is, is right.
Go wiſer thou!
Deſtroy all creatures for thy ſport or guſt,
Yet ſay if man's unhappy, God's unjuſt:

Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge his juſtice, be the god of God."

Sometimes too he ſinks into vulgariſms; as,

"Worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow,
The reſt is all but leather or prunella.
In Greenland, Zembla, or the Lord knows where."
Eſſay on Man.

How differently would Young, that moſt melancholy of all poets, have expreſſed himſelf on ſo ſerious a ſubject! He would have been as much on the ſide of ſolemnity, as Pope on that of levity. Hear how he enters on the ſubject of Philander's death!

"Dare I preſume then? but Philander bids,
And glory tempts, and inclination calls.
Yet am I ſtruck, as ſtruck the ſoul beneath
Aerial groves' impenetrable gloom;
Or in ſome mighty ruin's ſolemn ſhade,
Or gazing by pale lamps on high-born duſt
In vaults, thin courts of poor unflatter'd kings;
Or at the midnight altar's hallow'd flame.
It is religion to proceed: I pauſe,
And enter aw'd the temple of my theme."

The character of Dr. Young, as a poet, is mixed and unequal: his imagination deeply tinctured with melancholy, is alſo ſublime; indeed, both pathos and grandeur enter ſtrongly into his manner; but as he gives way to points of of wit, bombaſt, and a variety of affected conceits, he is rather to be reckoned a bold and irregular, than a correct, elegant or great poet. Yet he has had many imitators, and ſtill more admirers.

His imagination is at leaſt as elevated as that of Pope; but his judgment and taſte appear much inferior, and his wit leſs delicate.

Notwithſtanding the predominance of melancholy in his temper, and his extreme devotion, he is ſaid to have been

at times remarkably joyous and turned for amuſement; and it is certain that his ambition was ſuch, that he more than once endeavoured to get into parliament, but was as often diſappointed; and, for all his acquaintance at court, he died ſo poor that he ſcarce left expences for his funeral.

He died 1765; having lived 81 years, a greater age than moſt poets have ever enjoyed.

Among the beſt and moſt correct of his pieces, is the Love of Fame, or Univerſal Paſſion. It is a Satire in the manner of Juvenal; and excellent throughout. From many that could be given in this poem, we ſhall ſelect the following paſſage, as both poetical and juſt.

" The love of praiſe, howe'er conceal'd by art,
Reigns more or leſs, and glows in every heart:
The proud to gain it toils on toils endure,
The modeſt ſhun it but to make it ſure.
O'er globes and ſceptres, now on thrones it ſwells,
Now trims the midnight lamp in college-cells.
It aids the dancer's heel, the writer's head,
And heaps the plain with mountains of the dead;
Nor ends with life, but nods in ſable plumes,
Adorns our hearſe, and flatters on our tombs."

His Laſt Day in three parts has great poetical merit, mixed with ſome extravagance; but his two tragedies, the Buſiris and Revenge, although ſtill cried up by ſome, appear to us to be written in as bombaſt a ſtyle, as the characters in them are unnatural. " Indeed, (ſays a certain critic,) thoſe " two plays would furniſh ſufficient materials for a new " Rehearſal, ſhould it pleaſe heaven to produce a wit and " critic like Buckingham, to check the again degenerate " courſe of falſe taſte." G.

His Night Thoughts may be conſidered as a rhapſody of brilliant ſentences thrown together without much order, and with too much affectation. The hunt after metaphor and flowery expreſſion, is viſible throughout. Yet, per-

haps, the author deemed this neceſſary in a miſcellaneous poem ſupported by thoughts alone; there being no fable or ſtory to intereſt the reader, or ſupport the attention through ſo long a work. Hence the utmoſt range is given to fancy upon detatched thoughts; the poet all the while labouring the expreſſion to make them ſtrike. Hence the Night Thoughts pleaſe moſt upon the firſt reading; they arreſt attention by their glare and ſplendor, but tire and appear wild upon repeated peruſal.

After all, they muſt be allowed to abound in juſt reflexions on human life, in high raptures of devotion, in many ſtrokes of the pathetic, and in a variety of pious, ſerious, and elevated thoughts, ſuited to certain diſpoſitions and circumſtances in life. They are accordingly admired by many, and are indeed well adapted to ſerious and religious occaſions; as tending to purify our hearts, and to raiſe us above this world and its vain enjoyments, to heaven, to virtue, and to God.

Dr. Young, therefore, is the moſt religious of all our poets, if we except Milton and Thomſon. His devotion differs from theirs ſo far, as it bears impreſt upon it, in ſtrong colours, the particular doctrines of Chriſtianity; whereas Milton and Thomſon had their devotion more excited by enlarged views of God's providence in the works of nature, and his government diſplayed in the moral world.

To return to Pope—We ſaid before that his ſtyle approached often to petulance and preſumption, even on ſubjects the moſt ſolemn. We incline to think the reaſon of this might be an extreme opinion of his own abilities, as well as a penetrating inſight into the characters and foibles of mankind. Both theſe qualities gave him a turn for ſatire, and having written in that department with ſucceſs and reputation, this added to his natural ſelf-ſufficiency; ſtill more increaſed by the attention of the great, and the careſſes and adulation of moſt of all the wits of his time. Hence that dictatorial ſuperiority he aſſumes in his didactic Epiſtles,

and that unbounded authority he exerciſed in the regions of Satire. Hear himſelf ſpeak:

"Yes I am proud! I muſt be proud to ſee,
Men not afraid of God, afraid of me."

Yet ſtill; tho' we arraign Pope for levity or preſumption, on ſome occaſions, we muſt allow that there there is a general ſolemnity in his manner which commands attention; and, indeed, forms a predominant feature in his character upon the whole.

As he writes on men and manners, his ſubjects come home to every man's boſom. Hence he is one of the moſt inſtructive and moral of our poets. From the particular turn of his imagination he is at once engaging and elevating. Even on ſubjects that are humorous, his ſtyle is genteel and ſplendid, and aſpires at dignity. There is a ſweet gravity, a lively ſerioufneſs in almoſt all his thoughts; his manner being free, bold, and animated; the ſpirit of poetry equally breathing throughout the whole.

As inſtances of the lively, mixed with the ſweet, are his Epiſtles to Mrs. Blount, Mr. Jervas, and Dr. Arbuthnot; his different Ethic Epiſtles, together with the imitations of Horace and Dr. Donne; all which are finiſhed with the greateſt art, and written with a delightful ſpirit of eaſe, elegance, and good-humoured ſatire.

His adaptation of Horace to modern facts and manners is done with wonderful eaſe and addreſs.

His more ſerious pieces are, his Temple of Fame, Elegy on the Death of a Lady, Meſſiah, and Eloiſa to Abelard; which laſt, in particular, will for ever conſecrate him as a poet of conſiderable rank in the pathetic and ſublime.

His Sappho to Phaon, tranſlated from Ovid, has alſo great merit on the ſame account, and even excels the original in amorous tenderneſs. Indeed, on all occaſions where love is concerned, Pope is obſerved to expreſs himſelf with peculiar tenderneſs.

But our author's admired maſter-pieces, both as works of imagination and humour, are his Rape of the Lock, and Dunciad; two pieces of burleſk ſatire, that have been more cried up by ſome than all his other works, though we think improperly. As imitations, no doubt, they have conſiderable merit; the one imitating the Secchia Rapita, an Italian work †, the other Dryden's Macflecknoe. But ſuch pieces of wit, however well written, are at beſt but entertaining for the time; they may be ſaid to be local, and to laſt only for an age.

I ſpeak thus, when comparing them with the more ſublime and ſerious exertions of wit; ſuch as beautiful imitations of nature, like thoſe of Thomſon in his Seaſons; the juſt delineation of human paſſions and character, like thoſe of Shakeſpear or Addiſon, which will pleaſe after a thouſand readings; whereas ſuch pieces of wit as the Dunciad, being ſuited only to a particular occaſion or incident, are more the offspring of the authors fancy, than a real exhibition of nature. They pleaſe, and perhaps delight, for the time; but afterwards, very much loſe their influence, and perhaps gradually die away with the circumſtances that produced them. They at beſt but pleaſe a few particular readers, but have little or no effect on the multitude.

Yet I confeſs I have been often highly entertained and delighted with theſe two pieces of Pope, which I conſider as maſter-pieces of the kind; eſpecially the Dunciad, which poſſeſſes much wit, humour, and wild invention, excellent harmony and beauty of diction, many juſt ſatiric ſtrokes of character, interſperſed with ſeveral natural and local circumſtances, which render it, in my opinion, a more engaging and entertaining work than any other of the ſame kind. The fourth book of the Dunciad is particularly excellent for the above beauties.

Pope's Eſſay on Man we have already found fault with, for an air of levity unſuitable to the ſubject: its philoſophy is alſo reprehenſible; and, of all Pope's pieces, in point of of compoſition, we deem it the worſt. It has neither his

† Written by Taſſoni.

uſual perſpicuity nor dignity; it is too verboſe to be clear; and too dry and ſcientific to be intereſting.

After having endeavoured to do juſtice to Pope, without concealing or palliating his faults, let us now return to his maſter for whom he himſelf ſeems always to have had the greateſt veneration. Conſidering that Dryden was among the firſt reformers of Engliſh rhyme, the precedence muſt be given him before Pope, who only followed his footſteps, and owed all his improvements to the original from whom he copied.

In ſtrength of diction Dryden often equals, but in ſweetneſs and variety of numbers generally ſurpaſſes him *. We inſtance Abſalom and Achitophel, Macflecknoe, and the tragedy of Aurengzebe; in which laſt, though the rhyme be a very improper vehicle for dramatic characters to expreſs themſelves in, there is to be found the ſweeteſt verſification in the world.

EXAMPLE:

"You ſaw but ſorrow in its waning form,
A working ſea, remaining from a ſtorm;
When the now weary waves rowl o'er the deep,
And faintly murmur ere they fall aſleep."

Dryden's character, as a dramatic writer, admits of exceptions. That he wrote often careleſsly or too haſtily in this way, merely for bread, and to ſupply the wants of the preſent moment, cannot be denied. Many of his plays no doubt are imitations from the French; but there are ſome of them

* Pope's lines are often obſerved to be too monotonous and tireſome; whereas Dryden's poſſeſs a more full, ſweet, and diverſified harmony.

EXAMPLE OF MONOTONY FROM POPE:

"The vivid emeralds there revive the eye,
The flaming rubies ſhew their ſanguine dye,
Bright azure rays from lively ſapphires ſtream,
And lucid amber caſts a golden gleam."

alſo original, or pretty much his own invention. His language, particularly, is his own, as alſo frequently the characters, contrivance, or deſign. His language is generally correct; and diſtinguiſhed for elegance above the writers of his time.

One great reaſon of the diſparity of ſtyle betwixt Pope and Dryden, and of the greater inequality of the latter, ſeems to have ariſen from their different manner of life. Pope, from a natural weakneſs of conſtitution, was obliged to be ſober and regular in his living; his circumſtances were alſo better to afford him eaſe and leiſure for poetical ſtudies; and he appears to have made it a rule in writing, that, if we cannot come up to the ancients in genius, we ought the more to make amends for it, by ſtudying correctneſs. Hence his general and ſuperior correctneſs to Dryden; and hence a pomp and elevation of diction likewiſe ſuperior.

On the other hand, the greateſt diſadvantage Dryden laboured under was his poverty, and as he himſelf ſays, *the unſettledneſs of his condition*, which may excuſe his more careleſs and haſty productions, eſpecially in dramatic poetry. His Epiſtles dedicatory, plainly tell us that he wrote for bread. "As I am no ſucceſſor to Homer in his wit, ſays "he, ſo neither do I deſire to be in his poverty. I can make "no rhapſodies, nor go a-begging at the Græcian doors, "while I ſing the praiſes of their anceſtors."

In another place, (the preface to All for Love), he ſays, "We who write, if we want the talent, yet have the ex- "cuſe that we do it for a poor ſubſiſtence; but what can be "urged in their defence, who not having the vocation of "poverty to ſcribble, out of mere wantonneſs take pains to "make themſelves ridiculous?"

Doubtleſs there is ſomething mean in ſuch plain confeſſions, eſpecially when it is known that at this time he was Poet Laureat with a ſalary of a L. 100 a-year and a tierce of wine, and was beſides patronized by dukes and lords, and all the firſt-rate noble wits in England, who probably

made him handſome preſents. Yet the ſame conduct, with rather more friends and a better income, is imputed to his predeceſſor in the laureat-ſhip, Ben Johnſon. "But, as the "writer of his life ſays, ſuperfluous wealth has been ſeldom "a part of the muſes dowry; and but few of her train have "been able to boaſt the ſplendor and gifts of fortune; nor "was Johnſon free from the too common foibles incident to "the poetic tribe, extravagance and bad œconomy." Such was the caſe with Dryden.

His Spaniſh Friar is undoubtedly his maſter-piece in the Drama, and where his powers are exerted to the utmoſt, in good ſtrokes of the pathetic, the deſcriptive, and excellent humour. As a tragic-comedy it is unequalled in our language. The compoſition is the beſt, the humour various, the ſerious and pathetic intervene on proper occaſions; in fine, the whole is wrought up with the pencil of a maſter, and affords the higheſt entertainment.

There are in the play of the Enchanted Iſland, as reformed from Shakeſpeare by Dryden and Sir William Davenant, ſome characters of an uncommon, or rather incredible kind, ſo well ſupported by the abilities of the authors, as to induce us to believe them probable; although we are certain that they never exiſted, except in their imagination. The characters of Ferdinand and Hippolito on the one hand, and Miranda and Dorinda on the other, we may fairly ſay, never exiſted; yet they are here drawn with ſuch juſtneſs, and contraſted with ſuch judgment, as to appear both new and natural, and become exceedingly entertaining.

The World well Loſt, by Dryden, (though an imitation), has ſeveral new and excellent ſcenes; and there are ſeveral others of his plays, though moſtly imitations, or reformed pieces borrowed from others, that ſtill derive new graces from the excellence of his ſtyle and numbers.

Compared to Otway, as a dramatic writer, Dryden is pompous and deſcriptive; his pieces being addreſt more to the imagination than the heart; and he himſelf confeſt, that though Otway, compared to him, was illiterate and

ignorant, yet that he excelled him in one thing; "the "power of moving the paſſions."

Dryden's ſluggiſhneſs or dulneſs in converſation, of which even he himſelf complains; and upon which Dr. Johnſon ſpeculates ſo much, might ariſe from a very obvious cauſe; to wit, a deficiency of animal ſpirits alone. This, perhaps, more than any thing, will account for that modeſty, reſerve, and diffidence, for which many great wits are ſo remarkable. Virgil ſpoke extremely little; the wit of Thomſon never flowed till midnight; and even Pope was obſerved to be ſilent in company, till he had heated his fancy by a chearful glaſs. Addiſon's reſerve and taciturnity are well known; nor was it till late at night, when the generous wine had circulated freely, that any of that humour, or elegant converſation could be drawn from him, of which none but his moſt intimate friends knew him to be poſſeſſed. All theſe were, probably, all men of weak animal ſpirits and delicate nerves; and who needed more than an ordinary ſpur to diſpoſe them, in any degree, to unfold and diſplay their intellectual treaſures.

Perhaps it may not appear unentertaining, or foreign to our ſubject, ſtill farther to obſerve the frequent diſparity or unlikeneſs betwixt the external appearance of the greateſt men, and the internal diſpoſition of their minds, in the following remarkable inſtances.

Eſop, the famous fabuliſt, with all his wit, was humpbacked and deformed. Ariſtotle is ſaid to have been dwarfiſh, crooked, and liſping; but being rich in fortune, as well as mental endowments, was thought fit to be the companion, preceptor, and ſecretary of Alexander the Great. Alexander himſelf, for all his greatneſs of ſoul, was of ſmall and diminutive ſtature. The countenance of Socrates was coarſe and rough; or rather that of a rake, and worthleſs perſon. The appearance of Plato was plain and ſimple; that of Virgil ruſtic and awkward. The features of Newton and Addiſon were languid; and by no means beſpoke their active and intelligent minds. So that though, in ge-

neral, the countenance, air of perſon or converſation, announce or teſtify, more or leſs, the nature and diſpoſition of the mind within, the above are examples, with many more that could be given, of the greateſt geniuſes, and the beſt of men; that they do not always expreſs them †.

To return to Dryden: His great uſe of the triplet ſeems rather a defect in his verſe; three lines rhyming at once being thought too tireſome for a nice ear to bear. At leaſt ſo thought Pope, who uſed it extremely ſeldom; and Swift rejected it altogether, no doubt, for the ſame reaſon.

Pope's great uſe of alliteration was borrowed from Dryden, who himſelf imitated Spenſer in this beauty. Along with rhyme, it ſeems to have been of Gothic, or rather of Celtic origin; and was particularly uſed by the Welſh bards, in their ſongs and other poetic compoſitions.

Yet we find it among the ancients. Lucretius is full of it; ſo is Catullus and Virgil after Lucretius. And even Homer indulges a little in it, ſo far as conſiſtent with that majeſtic ſimplicity which ſet him above attending to ſuch inferior and artificial beauties.

† By the above remarks I mean not to condemn the famous M. Lavater's ſyſtem of phyſiognomy lately publiſhed. He is certainly an entertaining and ingenious writer on the ſubject he treats; his ſtrictures often extremely juſt. His manner is new and intereſting; and, as he ſeems, on all occaſions, a warm friend to virtue and humanity, he deſerves the more notice on that account. Upon the whole, he is preferable to many of our modern viſionaries in ſcience; who give us nothing but dry diſquiſitions, ſceptical doubts, with a world of metaphyſical diſtinctions and ideal reveries, that, inſtead of amuſing or inſtructing us, revolt the heart, unhinge our principles, and darken our knowledge.

SECTION VII.

Of the Age of Swift and Addiſon; and of their reſpective Characters.

THIS has been juſtly called the golden age of our language. In it the principles of good-writing were much better underſtood and practiſed than in any of the former; and if the Engliſh was not improved in compaſs or dignity, at leaſt it acquired a correctneſs and purity hitherto unknown.

This was chiefly effected by Addiſon and Swift, two of the moſt excellent writers that any age or nation ever produced. They were, at the ſame time, excellent critics, and as they had imbibed, from cloſe ſtudy and imitation, the ſpirit and elegance of the ancients, they alſo adopted the purity of their morals. Being, moreover, men of wit and fine imagination, they were the better enabled to poliſh a language, already far advanced in refinement, to the higheſt pitch of improvement of which it might be deemed ſuſceptible.

Their great example influenced every thing. The quaint conceit and forced antitheſis were now laid aſide; the looſe novel and licentious play were alſo dropt; a greater decency reigned on the ſtage; and even pulpit-eloquence flouriſhed with more than ordinary luſtre and dignity under a Tillotſon, a Clarke, a Sherlock, and others.

Congreve ſeems the only exeeption to this remark, in regard to the ſtage. In his Comedies, particularly, he ſeems to have retained too much of the old leaven of affected wit, obſcenity, and ſmutty alluſion, which prevailed from the Reſtoration.

On the other hand, his tragedy of the Mourning Bride is chaſte, pure, and highly poetical in the language and ſen-

timents; although ſomewhat romantic and improbable in the fable and characters. But, upon the whole, I look upon it as a dramatic piece of real genius; poſſeſſing many pathetic ſtrokes, and many inſtances of the true ſublime. Pope's opinion of Congreve was great, and, I believe, deſerved *.

Addiſon's Cato, in point of compoſition and morality, is, perhaps, equal, if not ſuperior, to moſt of our beſt tragedies; but whether from want of nature or intereſt in the characters, or fire and paſſion in their delineation, this play however read and admired in the cloſet, is but coldly received on the ſtage. His principal character, though nobly framed and ſupported, is, perhaps, too ſevere; and the love-ſcenes too flat: But Addiſon was a cool genius, and unfit for delineation of tender paſſions. In this reſpect he may be called the modern Plato; with a fine, and even elevated imagination, he poſſeſſes all the ſagacity and gravity of that philoſopher. We ſee in both a ſtriking reſemblance in different reſpects.

We may, alſo, trace a reſemblance betwixt him and Newton, who was ſuperiorly great; and equally mild, grave, and modeſt: but Addiſon was the philoſopher of human nature; Newton that of the phyſical world.

Addiſon, as a poet, muſt be conſidered as far below him ſelf in other reſpects. Like Plato, he attempted poetry,

" * I am of a contrary opinion, as to this tragedy. I own it has " long maintained a general vogue, and is yet acted occaſionally with " vulgar applauſe; which I aſcribe to a flow of ſplendid expreſſions, " and ſuch quaint paſſages as the following:

" Life without Love is loſt, and time ſtands ſtill;
" What we refuſe to her, to Death we give,
" And then, then only, when we love, we live.

" But how inferior the run of ſuch plays, in general, to the powers " and genius of Shakeſpeare, our great maſter in dramatic writing of " every ſpecies." G.

but ſucceeded indifferently: like him, too, his genius took another turn, and ſucceeded to admiration.

As a critic he is at leaſt equal, if not ſuperior, to any that came after him. Witneſs his moſt ingenious and candid criticiſm on Milton's Paradiſe Loſt; and his excellent Eſſays on Wit and Imagination, beſides many other Eſſays on ſimilar ſubjects.

As a moraliſt and philoſopher of human nature, he ranks ſtill higher, and 'tis here his very great excellence and genius appear; neither can we ſee almoſt any thing in modern times, nor even among the ancients, to equal the originality, morality, and the pleaſant and natural humour of his Eſſays in the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian; though it muſt be allowed, he had able coadjutors in Swift, Steele, and others.

The particular turn of his genius appears in his delineation of moral character; many paſſages of humour; in his hitting off little incidents with ſpirit, particularly in regard to faſhions and manners; in his natural exhibitions of the phyſical world; in his Dreams, Viſions, and Moral Tales; all diſplaying views at once new and natural, yet ſtill his own invention; pleaſing and mild as his temper; deep and ſound as his underſtanding; juſt and correct as his taſte and judgment; and various and extenſive as his imagination and good ſenſe.

As Dr. Johnſon has mentioned Addiſon with ſo much praiſe, in regard to his humour, and but ſlightly touched on the character of Swift in this way, whoſe ſtyle he ſeems to deſpiſe on account of its ſimplicity; it may be proper here, to draw ſome compariſon, (eſpecially as they are ſo different), betwixt theſe two great maſters in the province of humour; but firſt I ſpeak of their ſtyle.

As to that of the latter, it muſt be allowed to addreſs itſelf but little to the paſſions and the heart. The genius of the author, influenced by his temper, diſpoſed him to reject metaphor and ſplendid alluſion; and it is with reluctance he ſeems, at any time, to give way to them. He

is, conſequently, ſevere and conciſe, and rather ſparing of words and epithets; whereas Addiſon is more touching, more elevated, more abundant and fluent in his ſtyle and diction.

The diction of Swift, though dry, is ſtill elegant, and ſuſtains a certain degree of dignity. Though not ſo ſplendid as Addiſon's, it is more unaffected, and generally more forcible; retaining, on all occaſions, a pure attic elegance, and excelling in a ſimple eaſy grace peculiar to itſelf.

Even on ſubjects where the author imitates ſome character below his own, ſuch as in Gulliver's Travels, and the Draper's Letters, his ſtyle, though remarkable indeed for its plainneſs, is ſtill extremely natural, and adapted to the characters it repreſents; it is, moreover, perſpicuous, ſomewhat more fluent, indeed, than his ordinary manner; yet ſtill excelling in neat ſimplicity. And it were better if our modern writers would imitate ſuch ſimplicity, than make themſelves ridiculous by gigantic airs of pompouſneſs, that, like Piſtol in the play, conveys nothing but vanity, bravado, and emptineſs.

As Addiſon's temper was mild and placid, his humour is of that kind that never offends. It entertains no reſentment or indignation againſt particular perſons. Diſintereſted and polite, it aſſumes no haughty airs of ſuperiority; is never exaggerated or ſevere, nor directed with vehemence or ill-nature againſt any particular ranks or denominations of mankind. It is a pure exhibition of character and no more; and never "o'erſteps the modeſty of nature *."

Beſides, it is not vices but rather follies that he attacks; ſuch as female levities, or male fopperies; and other ludicrous peculiarities impreſſed on character from conſtitution, habit or manner of life.

Sir Roger de Coverley, Will Honeycomb, &c. enormities in the ladies head-dreſs, hoops, or tuckers; the beaux's head, the coquet's heart, are all inſtances of that kind of humour that expoſes thoſe infirmities or peculiarities, that are apt to produce ridicule without exciting reſentment or

* Shakeſpear.

indignation in the reader. At leaſt, from the pen of Addiſon, whoſe temper was of the ſweeteſt kind, this humour flowed always in a ſtream of good-nature, untinged with malignity; yet ſo exquiſitely keen and delicate was it, that it ſeldom or ever failed to laugh out of countenance thoſe follies againſt which it was directed.

And often in the very turn of expreſſion there is a ſmile of humour, eaſier felt than deſcribed, peculiar to this author; yet ſo pleaſing to the reader, that we are even content to admit it into his more ſerious pieces.

On the other hand, Swift, from temper and genius, was led into that kind of humour, called Irony, a ſpecies of wit, that, under the maſk of gravity, couches the ſevereſt ſatire.

As Pope, whoſe temper was keener than Addiſon's, admitted this ſpecies of wit into his Rape of the Lock and Dunciad; ſo Swift, whoſe temper was more ſevere than that of either, carried this ſharp weapon into all his writings, employing it without mercy, not only againſt vices and follies of either ſex, but individuals of every rank, and even whole bodies of men. Hence his ſatire is always of the ſharpeſt kind. It is even bold and imperious, attacking, without ceremony or control, whatever comes in its way that is vitious, deteſtable, or ridiculous in the human race. Princes, lawyers, politicians, philoſophers, phyſicians, knaves, impoſtors, and fools of every rank, feel the weight of its indignation, and ſmart under its ſtrokes.

Swift's two maſter-pieces in this ſpecies of humour, are his Tale of a Tub, and Gulliver's Travels; eſpecially the laſt, where he traverſes a wide field of ſatire, and carries all before him by exertions of wit and humour that are quite aſtoniſhing. The maſk of gravity he aſſumes, adds poignancy to his wit, ſharpens the edge of his ſatire, and gives a freer range to his imagination, which indeed ſeems unbounded in the walks of humour and ſatire.

Swift, however, though ſuperior to Addiſon, and all the world, in burleſque humour, muſt yield to him in this, that

he has often a tartneſs, a ſeverity, and even indelicacy, that muſt give offence to almoſt every reader; and it is obſervable, among the ladies he is no favourite, which is not to be wondered at, conſidering the contemptuous and almoſt indiſcriminate ſeverity with which he treats them.

Yet with all this auſterity and indifference to the fair ſex in general, we are ſure that two of the moſt accompliſhed of that ſex admired him extremely: I mean the amiable Mrs. Johnſtone, and the witty, though proud, Miſs Vanhomrigh. As to his connection with the latter, we can know nothing farther than what he himſelf hath declared to us, very myſteriouſly, in his poem of Cadenus and Vaneſſa; but, for the former, we imagine that he had a moſt affectionate regard, and that even a gleam of love ſhone acroſs the uſual gloom of his temper, ſoftened his auſterity, and ſweetened his eſteem into tenderneſs.

He ſeems, particularly, to have been in love with her underſtanding, her wit, her taſte, her graceful, lively, and genteel accompliſhments; and he ſpeaks of her in the moſt feeling and tender manner, in that excellent character he draws of her after her death, which would induce one to believe that it could neither be from inſenſibility nor pride that he declined marriage with her, as ſome have ſuppoſed; or refuſed to declare it to the world, according to thoſe who imagine them privately married.

Without blaming Swift, therefore, in this inſtance, as ſome have done moſt ſeverely, I would rather aſcribe his reſerve in the caſe, to ſome reaſonable objection in his own mind, about which we may gueſs, but never can attain any degree of certainty.

Upon the whole, though we admire Swift as ſuperior to Addiſon in that kind of humour already mentioned, we muſt ſtill allow Addiſon to be the more agreeable writer. He is equally excellent on humorous or ſerious topics. His ſtyle, though perhaps not ſo nervous as Swift's, is ſweeter, fuller, and more flowing; his ſubjects are alſo more various; and adapted to more taſtes and capacities.

Swift, indeed, varies his ſtyle more, which he frequently does with the utmoſt eaſe and grace in adapting it to a particular character; but, as he ſometimes ſinks it into puerilities, or ſtains it with indelicacy, it is not ſo generally engaging as Addiſon's.

As Swift often ſlept at inns, and mixed in converſation with landlords, grooms, hoſtlers and others of the loweſt mob, it is not to be wondered at that he catched their manner, and adapted his ſtyle accordingly. Arbuthnot, his friend, did the ſame; and in John Bull, a truely comic ſatire, has diſplayed ſingular wit indeed, but all in the ſtyle of low humour, and mob-cant.

On the other hand, Addiſon's ſtyle is almoſt always elegant; and, even on humorous ſubjects of the loweſt kind, generally delicate and genteel. No modern, I believe, ever ſtudied and imitated the elegant ancients to more advantage than he did; or followed more their purity and accuracy of ſtyle; and ſo attentive was he to this accuracy, that he is ſaid often to have ſtopt the preſs for the ſake of altering a ſingle word or particle.

Conſequently, if we except ſome few grammatical inaccuracies or neglects of arrangement, which our late critics have obſerved, there is not an expreſſion or ſentence that could be altered for the better. But then with what delicacy and variety of ſentiment does he abound! what propriety of language! what refined humour! what good ſenſe! and to crown the whole, and which runs like a golden thread throughout the piece, there is a regard to decency and religion, and a love to human kind, that we imagine is peculiar to him, and that endears him to a ſenſible and feeling ſoul, almoſt above any author in our language.

SECTION VIII.

Of the Four Æras of the Engliſh Language; and their Characters.

THE firſt I reckon to have commenced with Chaucer, and ended with Spenſer. Several geniuſes of ſmaller note intervened betwixt theſe two; who have been properly taken notice of by Dr. Warton in his hiſtory of Engliſh poetry. This may be denominated the age of Provençal enthuſiaſm, and religious ſuperſtition, mixed with Gothic enchantment and demoniſm. Its character is highly wild and romantic. The humour, too, of this age bears a pleaſing, though extravagant rudeneſs; extremely expreſſive of its manners and character.

Shakeſpeare and Milton followed; and ſeem to have conſtituted the ſecond æra of our tongue. Under them the Engliſh language ſhone forth with a new and uncommon blaze of ſplendor. And, we preſume, whatever improvements were afterwards made in philoſophy and criticiſm, that the full powers of our own tongue were diſplayed in theſe great authors; and that we are more indebted to them than to all before or after them; their poetical works ſerving as a rich and inexhauſtible fund, from which future writers, both in verſe and proſe, have embelliſhed their compoſitions.

As it is ſaid of Plato and Demoſthenes, that they drew from the fountain-head of Homer; ſo Fletcher and Beaumont, Dryden and Pope, as well as our beſt proſe-writers, have borrowed from Shakeſpear and Milton, both the graces and ſpirit of their manner, as well as their harmony and happy expreſſions.

'Tis for these reasons that, in this work, poetical writers obtain a principal regard; but as literature or polite learning, justly recognizes philosophy oratory and history, as sister-arts with poetry; so these, as mutually connected and advancing each other; as productions of taste and genius; as elegant arts affording the highest improvement and pleasure to mankind, claim deserved attention; and as such we have always honoured them.

The character of this age seems to be a medium betwixt the romantic enthusiasm of the last; and the correctness and regularity of the following. Its spirit, however, is inspired by the loftiest exertions of native genius, founded on good sense, and supported very much by learning, reading, and reflection.

The third æra may be supposed to commence with Dryden and end with Pope, as its most finished and accomplished poets; and to begin with Locke and Shaftsbury, and end with Addison and Swift, as most distinguished for philosophy and morality. This is commonly reckoned the golden æra of our tongue;—the two last mentioned writers, particularly in prose, seem to have carried it to the highest pitch.—Neatness, correctness, and elegance, chiefly borrowed from the ancients, seem to be the proper characteristic of this age.

In regard to Shaftsbury, who was the disciple of Locke, we must make some exceptions; and though we may admire his philosophy and genius; we cannot in general approve his manner, which is often too sceptical and sarcastic, and his style almost always too elaborate and pompous; and debased with a kind of wittiscism, antithesis, and play upon words, that may dazzle at first, but never fails at last to disgust a true taste that is not led away by fantastic ornaments.

These faults in him are the more to be wondered at; that one would not expect them from so professed an admirer of the ancient simplicity; and from one, too, who studied

under a maſter who writes always in an elegant but clear and ſimple manner, and though ſometimes with pleaſantry and humour, yet always without affection.

Shaftſbury's Inquiry into Virtue, ſeems to be pretty clear of the above imputations, and almoſt on every account, worthy of our commendation. It ſeems an excellent ſyſtem of Morality, founded on ſentiment and benevolence, the beſt of all principles: and written in a correct and claſſical ſtyle reſembling that of Cicero's Offices.

The fourth and laſt æra of the Engliſh Language is the preſent; and though, in point of original genius, unequal to any of the former; yet for the ſtudy of criticiſm, ſound philoſophy, and a juſt knowledge of the rules of good compoſition, perhaps deſerves to be ranked as ſuperior to every other.

In no age whatever, has ſuch a profuſion of light been thrown upon the human mind, or its different powers, whether of intellect, taſte or genius; and all theſe elucidated and explained as connected with and referable to works of diſtinction.

The principles of Grammar and Rhetoric have been much better canvaſſed and underſtood; grammatical inaccuracies of the former age pointed out; and the Engliſh Language eſtabliſhed on a firmer baſis of method and accuracy than at any preceding period.

Theſe improvements, we may venture to ſay, have been very much owing to ſeveral eminent men of learning in England; and ſome in Scotland, who have written on various ſubjects of literature, language, and criticiſm. Among the former we may rank Hurd, Harris †, Lowthe, Prieſtly, Melmoth, with ſome others, who have particularly diſtinguiſhed themſelves; ſome as critics and philologiſts,

† Harris's Hermes; as well as Hurd's Political and Moral Dialogues, and his Commentary and Notes on Horace's Art of Poetry, deſerve the peruſal of every perſon of taſte.

others as excellent tranſlators; and all as encouragers of polite learning, liberal ſentiment; and revivers of the literature, and of the genuine and elegant ſimplicity of the uncorrupted ancients.

In Scotland, likewiſe, we have ſeveral philoſophers and and critics of very eminent merit; but I forbear to mention them, till I come to the view of Scotch Literature, in the following diviſion of this work.

PART I.

Scotch Literature.

SECTION I.

A View of Literature in Scotland; and of the moſt eminent Scotch Writers from the 13th Century to the preſent time.

THE Scots very early diſtinguiſhed themſelves for their genius in learning, even as far back as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.—I begin with mentioning a few of the more early wits.

Michael Scot of Balwirie, in the thirteenth century, was ſo learned in languages and philoſophy that, like Friar Bacon, he was eſteemed a magician. He travelled through France and Germany, and was received with diſtinction at the court of Frederick II. He tranſlated into Latin, from the Arabic, the hiſtory of animals by the celebrated phyſician Avicenna. He wrote a book concerning generation, phyſiognomy, and palmiſtry. He was a great conſultor of occult ſecrets of nature, which was then the favourite ſtudy, and which I ſuppoſe was borrowed from the Arabians. He believed in aſtrology and the powers of alchymy, and was very ſolicitous about the univerſal powder and the philoſopher's ſtone. He was no doubt a learned man; but the ignorance of the times added to his fame.

John Fordon, a prieſt of Mearnſhire, in the year 1308, wrote a hiſtory of Scotland, to which Buchanan often alludes, but objects to its veracity. It is, however, full of information and entertainment.

John Barbour, arch-dean of Aberdeen, flouriſhed in 1368; in the reign of David I. He was the firſt Scotch poet of any note whoſe works remain. He wrote the hiſtory of Robert the Bruce, an heroic poem ſtill extant. Though he lived prior to the age of Chaucer, he is deemed to be poſſeſt of a better ſtyle and harmony than that poet. I have never ſeen his works. The lateſt edition is that of Glaſgow, printed in 1672.

Hector Boethius was born at Dundee and ſtudied with applauſe in the univerſity of Paris. There he became acquainted with that ornament of literature, the ingenious and elegant Eraſmus. In 1500 he was recalled to Aberdeen by Biſhop Elphinſtone, who made him Principal of that univerſity. He wrote the hiſtory of the dioceſe of Aberdeen, and afterwards the hiſtory of Scotland; which laſt work, notwithſtanding its elegant and entertaining ſtyle, has been charged with fable and exaggeration. Hence the author has been compared, and not without reaſon, to Geoffry of Monmouth, an Engliſh writer of great antiquity.

William Dunbar was an elegant poet of the fifteenth century; and chiefly famous for the Thiſtle and the Roſe, a poem written in honour of Margaret daughter of Henry VII, married to James IV of Scotland. The Golden Terge; a very fanciful and ingenious piece, is alſo of his compoſition.

Of the ſame age were Robert Henryſon, an ingenious paſtoral poet; and John Bellentyne, arch-dean of Moray, author of an allegorical poem, called Virtue and Vice. And Archibald Scot in the year 1524 tranſlated the Viſion, a poem ſaid to have been written in 1360. He was, likewiſe, author of the Eagle and the Red-breaſt, and ſeveral other pieces; all of merit.

Next and not inferior to any of the above, ranks the learned Gawn Douglas, biſhop of Dunkeld; a moſt approved tranſlator of Virgil, for the age in which he lived. This curious work he completed in eighteen months or rather ſixteen; being for two months diverted from it by ſome troubleſome affairs: it was finiſhed 22d July 1513; a month and ſeventeen days before the battle of Flouden. There is a Gloſſary affixed to this work by Ruddiman; the moſt complete and excellent in its kind. He died in London, of the plague, 1522.

Sir David Lindſay of the Mount was ſo called from his paternal inheritance near Cupar in Fife, where he was born in the reign of James IV, and ſtudied at St. Andrews. Having made the tour of Europe, he returned to his native country 1512, where he was made preceptor to James V, while very young; of which he himſelf ſings in theſe words:

"When thou was young, I bare thee in my arms
Full tenderly, till thou began to gang;
And in thy bed oft happit thee full warm;
With lute in hand did ſweetly to thee ſang."

He was afterwards king at arms, and ſteward to the houſhold.——His verſes are eaſy; but they ſhow more learning than genius.

Nor muſt we forget of much the ſame age, (although a little later,) William Drummond of Hawthornden, hiſtoriographer to James V; a good hiſtorian and poet. He writes the hiſtory of the five Jameſes, in ſo intereſting a manner, and with ſuch judgment and propriety, that he has been compared to Livy. His poems conſiſt of love-ſonnets, epigrams, and epitaphs: many of which are ſpirited and pathetic, and breath a ſtrain of genuine poetry.—His Cypreſs-grove is an elegant and philoſophic piece. Ben Johnſon, of whom he mentions ſome curious particulars, paid him a viſit at Hawthornden, where Ben ſays he ſpent ſeveral

months the happieſt in his life:—it is one of the moſt ſweetly-romantic ſpots in Scotland.

Much about the ſame time flouriſhed James Crichton of Cluny, an extraordinary genius for learning, as well as every manly and genteel accompliſhment valued in that age. He travelled to Italy, and other countries; and on account of his various and uncommon endowments, acquired the name of the admirable Crichton. It is likely that his extraordinary qualities both of body and mind were the cauſe of his death. Vicencio de Gonzaga his pupil, and the Duke of Mantua's ſon, inſtigated by a fit of jealouſy, attacked him in the ſtreets with a band of maſked ruffians at dark midnight, and baſely murdered him in the year 1583; and in the 32d year of his age. Hawkeſworth, in his Adventurer, gives a good hiſtory and deſcription of him, which it is ſaid was dictated to him by Dr. Johnſon.

At Mr. Moriſon's of Bognie, in the county of Banff, there is a genuine portrait of this famous man, which I have ſeen. The features are much of the Scotch caſt; ſharp and long; but comely and well-proportioned. They reſemble a good deal the outlines of James V, and his daughter and ſucceſſor Queen Mary; who were both complete patterns of Scotch beauty; for the Engliſh viſage is evidently more full, plump and rounded.

There is nothing of Crichton's works extant, but two poems; one in praiſe of the city of Venice, and the other addreſſed to Aldus Manutius a famous printer and editor in thoſe days. Both which pieces are to be ſeen in the firſt volume of the Deliciæ poetarum Scoticorum.

Roman learning, in particular, ſeems to have been the favourite ſtudy of thoſe times, and was eagerly cultivated even by royal perſonages. At this period flouriſhed Florence Wilſon of Elgin, who died in his way from Italy. He lived a little prior to Buchanan, and writes his book, de Tranquillitate Animi, in elegant Latin; ſomewhat in the manner of Cicero. He likewiſe wrote ſome poems, printed London 1619.

Then come George Buchanan, and his pupil James VI; the former the moſt learned man in his age; a moſt elegant hiſtorian and poet, and indeed in all reſpects an honour to his country. Arthur Johnſtone, was his rival in Latin verſe, but wants his ſpirit and elegance. King James's elegant Latin Letters, ſhow that he profited well by ſo able a tutor.—Not even Vida or Sanazarius, who excel in the beauty and eaſe of their verſe, could equal the ſpirit of Buchanan. His Pſalms, in particular, have great merit; emulating at once the grace of Horace and the ſublimity of Virgil. Witneſs, eſpecially, the 104, 18, 29.—He died at Edinburgh 1582, in the 76th year of his age.

I have elſewhere mentioned James V as an excellent and original compoſer of humorous and witty ſongs in the ancient Scotch dialect; in which path he has been followed by Allan Ramſay and Robert Ferguſon of late poetic memory; and by the preſent Robert Burns.

We may, likewiſe, take notice on this occaſion of Alexander Roſs of Aberdeen, chaplain to Charles I, and author of many books both in Latin and Engliſh. He publiſhed in the former a Cento on the life of Chriſt, called the Chriſtiad, which I have read. As a patch-work it is very ingenious, and wonderfully wrought up in the ſtyle and manner of Virgil. It is a ſerious and chaſte piece; and very different indeed from the Virgilian parody of Auſonius, which is remarkable for a continued ſeries of obſcene alluſions. Our author's great work, however, is his Continuation of Sir Walter Raleigh's Hiſtory of the World; that moſt wonderful of all hiſtories, conſidering that it was compoſed by a man in misfortune, and confined within the gloomy walls of a priſon.

Alexander Arbuthnot, of the family of baron Arbuthnot in the Mearns, and Principal of King's College, Aberdeen, was of the ſame age with Buchanan, and Sir Andrew Melvil; but much more moderate. If he was not ſo good a poet as the former; he is ſaid to have been equally expert in ſcience;

being an excellent mathematician, philoſopher, theologian, lawyer, and phyſician. Perhaps Dr. Arbuthnot, the friend of Pope and Swift, might have inherited his various and verſatile genius from the ſame ſource, as he was deſcended from the ſame family.

I come now to ſpeak of the moſt diſtinguiſhed of our more modern writers on different ſubjects.

As hiſtorians we poſſeſs Spottiſwood, Melvil, Abercromby, Crawford, Maitland, Guthrie, John Knox, and Biſhop Burnet; all men of good parts, indefatigable diligence, and conſiderable learning. To theſe you may join, as learned and eminent Civilians, Craig, Barclay, Sir George Mackenzie, Fletcher, Gibſon, Preſident Forbes, Lord Kames; with innumerable others both of hiſtorical or juridical fame. We muſt not omit Dirleton, one of the beſt and the moſt elegant writers in the Scotch law.

Thomas Craig of Riccarton lived in the reign of James VI. He was the author of a learned and accurate treatiſe, entitled Jus Feudale. Dr. Hurd in his Dialogues, Moral and Political, mentions this book with honour. Craig is likewiſe the author of a well-written hiſtorical piece, "De "Republica Lacedemoniorum."

In Natural Hiſtory we have Robert Sibbald the author of a hiſtory of Fifeſhire, and the Natural Hiſtory of Scotland; Lachlan Shaw the hiſtorian of Moray; Colin Milne and Robert Moriſon of Aberdeen; both very learned and eminent botaniſts. This laſt going to Oxford was promoted to the Botanic chair on account of his great abilities. He writes a Latin hiſtory of Plants, in 3 vols. folio. He died at London 1683. Campbell, the ingenious author of the Political Survey of Great-Britain and the Lives of the Admirals alſo deſerves notice in this place. He was from Glen-Lyon in Perthſhire.

As mathematicians of particular eminence we can produce the two Gregories, Pitcairn, Lord Napier, Maclaurin, Ferguſon, Matthew and John Stuart; authors of the firſt rank, eminent both for their diſcoveries and virtues, and whoſe

names, on account of the great utility of their writings, bid the faireſt for ſailing down the ſtream of time with diſtinguiſhed luſtre and dignity.

As a philologiſt and grammarian of the moſt eminent merit, we have Thomas Ruddiman; one of the ableſt claſſical ſcholars of modern times, and whoſe grammatical works have been ſo ſingularly uſeful in promoting claſſical learning both at home and abroad. Mair, (late of Perth academy), as an illuſtrator of Ruddiman, in his Introduction to the making of Latin, alſo deſerves regard; and has, beſides, the merit of being a good tranſlator of Latin claſſics for the uſe of ſchools *.

At the head of our modern poets, and indeed of modern poetry in general, behold Thomſon, the glory of Scotland! Then come Mallet, Armſtrong, Hamilton, Home, Beattie, Ogilvie, Blacklock, Richardſon, Wilkie, all men of renown and abilities in the world of poetry; to whom we might add ſome others of later date, that deſerve regard; ſome, particularly, who have ſported in lyric ſong with pleaſing numbers and ſweet deſcription.

Need I mention as famous artiſts, George Jameſon, the Caledonian Vandyke, and condiſciple with that great maſter, in the ſchool of Rubens; Lord Kelly, celebrated over Europe for a bold and ſpirited ſtyle of muſic peculiarly his own; and the very eminent architects, Gibb, Milne, and the two Adams's? The laſt, in particular, for juſtneſs of

* Profeſſor William Duncan of Aberdeen was well verſed in grammar and philology, and an excellent tranſlator of Cæſar and Cicero. See likewiſe his logic; and ſome good treatiſes in the Preceptor done by his hand.

Dr. George Chapman's Treatiſe on Education lately publiſhed, unfolds in a clear, ſimple, and elegant manner, the beſt plan of claſſic education I am yet acquainted with; and as ſuch merits attention in our ſchools.

Dr. Beattie has alſo written an excellent Treatiſe on the Utility of Claſſical Learning; well deſerving notice in this literary age.

taſte and originality of compoſition are deſervedly eſteemed as the foremoſt in their profeſſion; and as the great promoters of that ſimple and majeſtic ſtyle, which conſtitutes the chief beauty in all the fine arts.

But what at preſent moſt diſtinguiſhes Scotland, is the excellence of her hiſtorians, philoſophers, and phyſicians.

Among the former we can boaſt of Robertſon, the Livy of modern times; Hume an excellent hiſtorian, though a paradoxical philoſopher and avowed freethinker; the honeſt, lively, and ingenious Smollet; the ſpirited Macpherſon; the induſtrious Henry; Stuart the elegant hiſtorian of Queen Mary and the Reformation in Scotland; with the learned and conciſe memoir-writers, Lord Hailes and Sir John Dalrymple.

As philoſophers and critics we have the reſpectable names of Kames, Reid, Smith, Miller, Ferguſon, Campbell, Gerard, Blair. Theſe have not only inveſtigated the principles of taſte and ſound philoſophy, in a manner that gives credit to the age; but have adopted a ſtyle of purity and preciſion that merits imitation from ſucceeding writers *.

Some of theſe philoſophers have alſo ſignalized themſelves in demoliſhing that fabric of falſe philoſophy that hung like a cloud on all the realms of learning, depreſſed literature, darkened the luſtre of virtue; and, by repreſenting every object of human intellect as ideal and uncertain, threw down the walls of common ſenſe, trampled on the ſhrines of religion, and rendered all preſent purſuits and future proſpects, equally vain, nugatory, and ridiculous.

An airy, though ingenious fabric had been raiſed, to which Mr. Locke had unwittingly afforded the firſt materials;

* "Lord Monboddo deſerves mention among our Scotch metaphyſicians and critics. He is certainly ingenious; but his ſtyle is often inelegant; and his thoughts *outrè*. He is a pleaſant and agreeable man, and of uncommon learning; but he is too credulous and too much attached to the ancient metaphyſics which are now generally exploded, and looked upon as frivolous." G.

Biſhop Berkely afterwards carried on the work with much art and addreſs; and Mr. Hume, with equal ingenuity, reared it higher ſtill, and at laſt brought it to its higheſt pitch. All at once this wonderful pile met with confuſion, as it were from above; the winds and the tempeſts blew, and ſhook it to the foundations. However, Babel-like, built with labour, vanity, and blind ambition; as it had no ſtable or ſecure baſe, like a building on the ſand, it yielded to the firſt blaſt; it tottered and fell.

After all, am I not too bold in thus depreciating a ſyſtem raiſed by ſuch great wits; and to which many deem no effectual anſwer can be given? I own it has great plauſibility; and, on ſome former occaſions, I have been much ſtaggered with it; eſpecially when embelliſhed by the ingenuity and elegance of ſuch reſpectable authors. I only wiſhed for a champion equal to the cauſe; if not to ſubdue, at leaſt to obviate the pernicious tendency of its full effects; for it was poſſible that this ſyſtem, beſides its influence on the ſpeculative and the idle, might extend its baneful contagion over ſociety in general, and produce the moſt fatal conſequences.

Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind firſt paved the way to the triumph of common ſenſe over the *ideal philoſophy*. This book, in my opinion, was an effectual anſwer; or at leaſt all the anſwer that can be given. It is, indeed, original in its kind; and ſhows uncommon ingenuity and invention in the author. It is ingenious both in the thought and contrivance; the ſtyle preciſe and accurate, and conducted with the clearneſs of a mathematical demonſtration; yet with the utmoſt elegance, and often with peculiarly ſtrong expreſſion, and good ſtrokes of humour, ſo that the author muſt not only have a philoſophical imagination; an acute and penetrating mind, but a pleaſant humour and fine fancy; qualities rarely united in a genius directed to ſuch dry and abſtract ſubjects.

His Eſſays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man, have alſo much originality, and are purſued in the ſame lively and elegant manner with the above moſt excellent Inquiry.

An ingenuous modeſty, too, pervades all this author's writings; a virtue, which, though rare, in middling writers, is generally a concomitant and proof of the beſt.

The late Lord Kames has left eminent proofs of his learning, and the moſt active induſtry. His Elements of Criticiſm evidence an extenſive knowledge of literature, though not much ſenſibility or juſtneſs of taſte. He is, however, modeſt on the ſubject; and as he aſſumes but little, there is the more excuſe for his miſtakes. But we cannot help thinking he is too ſcientific and metaphyſical on a ſubject that depends on ſentiment and feelings, much more than on reaſon or intellect.

His Sketches on the Hiſtory of Man were written by ſtarts, and by way of amuſement, for many years. Detached and unconnected as they are, they ſhow great reach of thought, and wide obſervation.

Yet this author, though often intelligent, and generally amuſing; ſhows no great degree of brilliance or elegance in his writings. The reaſon ſeems to be, that he had much more learning than imagination; and he ſeems to have had no humour. Yet in company he was lively, and even paſt for a wit. But, perhaps, this was more owing to a high flow of ſpirits, and a ſtrong deſire to pleaſe; than to any great talent. Certain it is, that wit, even in your great geniuſes, appears not often in their converſation; either from a deficiency of animal ſpirits, reſerve, or a particular diffidence. But wit, if one has any, will ſhine out, one way or another, in the practice of writing; either in the ſplendor of the thought, or expreſſion; or in lively touches of humour.

It is obſervable, of his friend Hume, that he wants humour. He is, however, extremely elegant; and his ſtyle ſweet, flowing, and ſpirited, to a great degree. This ſhows imagination; as, wherever there are ſtrong and lively ideas, the expreſſion muſt be ſtrong and lively, of courſe. I conclude, therefore, it is poſſible to have elegance without wit, and a lively imagination without humour; but a writer

who wants the powers of imagination, though poſſeſt of the greateſt judgment and learning, will never be able to ſparkle with wit, or aſſume the garb of elegance. This talent is natural, and cannot be acquired.

Perhaps Lord Kames, with all his induſtry, was too careleſs to attend to elegance. His principal attention was given to facts, which are the objects of memory and judgment only. Theſe he arranged in order, and generally judged juſtly on them. In this reſpect he was ſpeculative, dry, and didactic; and dealt much in concluſions, rules, and maxims. His Art of Thinking, and Hints on Education, are uſeful and practical books in this way, and whatever his religious opinions may have been otherwiſe, they ſeem evidently written with a virtuous deſign, and for the good of ſociety.

Upon the whole, as to his qualifications as a critic, I believe it may with juſtice be ſaid, that what taſte he had was of that kind which intellect and penetration produce, without the aid of ſentiment. Like Ariſtotle's, it was acute without being lively or natural; it ſaw but felt not; quite different from that of Longinus, who felt with the rapture of a poet, while he judged like a critic. Hence the latter is eloquent even to exceſs; his fire and ſenſibility led him to expreſs himſelf in a ſtyle too bold and metaphorical; he flouriſhes and figures in a high ſtyle; often too affected.

Dr. Blair, as a critic, has, we think, attained a good degree of the happy medium between dryneſs and floridity of ſtyle; and, upon the whole, is one of the juſteſt critics of modern times. His Lectures on Rhetoric, and the Belles Lettres, are already too well known for us to enlarge on their merit. We ſhall only obſerve, that beſides the ingenuity, variety, and juſtneſs of the criticiſm; they are diſtinguiſhed by that eaſe and elegance of manner that is ſufficiently pleaſing and ſuitable to the ſubject.

Drs. Campbell and Gerard, beſides having diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the controverſy againſt Mr. Hume; are par-

ticularly eminent as orators and philologiſts. The Philoſophy of Rhetoric of the former; and the Eſſay on Taſte, as well as that on Genius, of the latter; do them real honour, and are equal to any works of the kind in any language. "Dr. Campbell's Sermons, in point of eloquence and good "compoſition, are, perhaps, among the beſt of the age; "and ſuperior even to Dr. Blair's." G.

Dr. Gerard, beſides his fine taſte in the arts, is one of the moſt able ſcripture-critics; and has thrown a new light on many paſſages hitherto but ill underſtood. I have heard his diſcourſes with much pleaſure. His diſtinct and extenſive memory, his great erudition, knowledge of the world, and communicative temper render him one of the moſt agreeable men in converſation. And when it is known how ſtudious has been his life; and what a world of time it has coſt him to have accumulated ſuch a maſs of knowledge, it is not a little uncommon and ſurpriſing to find him ſo ſocial and converſable.

Dr. Smith, the author of the Theory of Moral Sentiments, and the Wealth of Nations, deſerves to be ranked among the foremoſt of our philoſophers. This laſt work has juſtly met with great applauſe, as it contains many important and original thoughts, upon a ſubject hitherto but little canvaſſed; and is expreſſed in eaſy perſpicuous language, in which the Doctor excels. But we are to conſider him chiefly as a moraliſt.

The late profeſſor Hucheſon of Glaſgow, as a diſciple of Shaftſbury, founded virtue in a ſentiment of beauty, decency and decorum. Like a flower, a picture, or piece of muſic, he made it the object of taſte or paſſion, and placed it in the heart. In this he had Nettleton and Harris to join him; who both went upon the plan of Plato on this ſubject.

Before this, in England, Dr. Clark, a moſt able mathematician, and reaſoner, made all virtue or moral duty, to depend on reaſon, and the eternal fitneſſes or relations of things. This ground ſeemed pretty ſure, as however vari-

able our paſſions or ſentiments may be, our mind or reaſon, which dictates the above relations, remains the ſame; hence theſe relations are deemed eternal.

On the other hand, Dr. Smith, builds morals on ſympathy, and ſpins out, with the utmoſt eaſe, a very ingenious theory. All theſe theoriſts, no doubt, found ſomething in themſelves that diſpoſed them to a particular ſyſtem; and though none of them are in the wrong, it may be as truely ſaid, that none are entirely in the right; each taking partial, though not the moſt comprehenſive views of the ſubject.

Is not their plan, however, much more decent and honourable than Rochefaucault's, who places all our principles and actions, to the account of ſelf-love; a moſt plauſible and catching theory, embraced in practice by too many? This is like baniſhing virtue out of the world; for where is the virtue in doing, not only every indifferent but even the beſt actions, with a ſiniſter view to favour our own paſſions, vanities, and ſelf-intereſts?

Indeed it is evident, that true virtue conſiſts of moſt or all the three ſyſtems joined together. In ſome, ſympathy or ſentiment may be the moſt powerful motive to virtuous actions; in others, reaſoning or reflection; in others a ſenſe or feeling of what is beautiful or decent; or what is moſt conducive to real happineſs. But in order to render the ſource of virtuous action complete; is it not probable that both ſentiment and reaſon ſhould unite their combined influence, as their effects will then be more fully exerted, and prove more beneficial to ſociety?

Virtue without ſentiment is ſlow, deliberate, cold, and contracted; without reaſoning, unſteady, blind, and ill-directed. Therefore both reaſoning and ſentiment appear requiſite to produce the full effect. In fine, upon a proper adjuſtment of our mental, with our ſenſitive powers, and a rational balance of the affections, ſeems to depend the main of our virtue, as well as our happineſs; for happineſs is as natural a conſequence of virtue, as heat is of fire, or light of the ſun.

Let us now take a view of our phyſicians.—We have the reſpectable names of Pitcairn, Whyte, Alſton, Hunter, the two Monros, Cullen, and the late ingenious Dr. John Gregory.

This laſt was a lineal deſcendent from the two Gregories already mentioned, as eminent mathematicians. His amiable manners and fine taſte, will ever do him honour as a man. His laſt Advice to his Daughters, is an exquiſite little piece; his Duties of a Phyſician more diffuſe, but not leſs uſeful for the ſubject, and his Comparative View of Man, is written in an elegant ſtyle, though we cannot help thinking its plan a little obſcure.

Dr. Pitcairn, phyſician to James and Charles I, was born at Edinburgh, Dec. 1652. He had a very ſtrong and verſatile genius; and, though eminently ſkilled in phyſic, he was alſo a mathematician, and a claſſic ſcholar of the firſt rank.

As a proof how great his fame was, and how much eſtabliſhed throughout Europe, he was invited 1691 to fill the vacant medical chair at Leyden.

He was one of the firſt members of the Royal College of Phyſicians, inſtituted at Edinburgh, 1681.

He firſt introduced mathematical and mechanical reaſoning into phyſic; aſcertained the circulation of the blood as diſcovered by Harvey; and exploded the erroneous doctrines of the chemiſts and Galeniſts.

Beſides the encomiums paſt upon him, by Boerhave and Mead, who were his ſcholars; even his remaining works, though not left in the beſt order, evince ſufficiently that he was an uncommon genius, fitted for ſtriking out new paths in ſcience, and to ſhine as a ſtar of the firſt magnitude in the world of phyſic.

In his old age he amuſed himſelf with poetry, for which he had always a very fine taſte; and his elegant Latin verſes, prove that he was no mean proficient in this art; he died 1713.

Dr. Alexander Monro, was deſcended of the family of Monro of Milton in Roſs-ſhire, and by his mother from that of Forbes of Culloden. John, his father, was bred to phyſic and ſurgery; and ſerved as ſurgeon in the army, under King William in Flanders. His ſon Alexander was born September 1697.

He ſhowed early inclinations to the ſtudy of phyſic; and, after enjoying the beſt education that Edinburgh then afforded, he was ſent ſucceſſively to London, Paris, and Leyden.—At London he attended Hawkſbee, Whiſton, and Cheſelden. In 1718 he ſtudied at Leyden under the great Boerhave. With all theſe maſters he gave the greateſt application, and had their higheſt approbation.

On his return to Edinburgh he was choſen joint anatomical profeſſor with Drs. Drummond and Macgill. And ſoon after before the preſident and fellows of the college of Phyſicians and the whole company of Surgeons, he read ſome lectures in anatomy, illuſtrated by ſeveral new and uncommon preparations of his own; which were received with great applauſe.

In 1720 Drs. Alſton and Monro began regular lectures: which was the firſt courſe of regular lectures on any of the branches of medicine that had ever been read at Edinburgh; and was the opening of that medical ſchool that has ſince flouriſhed and gained ſo much reputation.

It is well known that Dr. Monro and his father were among the firſt propoſers of a plan for a new hoſpital; as the ſyſtem of medical education was ſtill incomplete without the practice. A conſiderable ſum was ſoon raiſed by ſubſcription, and a houſe fit for holding 300 patients was planned by the late Mr. Adams, and executed, (under the ſuperintendence of our author and George Drummond Eſq; one of the moſt active promoters of the deſign), in a moſt elegant and commodious form.

By means of the above hoſpital, and the excellent profeſſors in every branch of medicine, the univerſity of Edinburgh has become, without doubt, the firſt medical ſchool

now in Europe. Perhaps Leyden formerly alone could match it; but this laſt has greatly fallen off in celebrity ſince the days of the eminent Boerhave.

Dr. Cullen, as an ingenious inveſtigator of new improvements, a nice obſerver and modeſt explainer of phenomena, ſtands perhaps unrivalled in the province of medicine. His Materia Medica, and Firſt Lines of the Practice of Phyſic, ſhow both ſolidity and original invention.

The preſent Dr. Monro, ſon of the former, is equally eminent in anatomy and phyſiology. His diligence and ſagacity are wonderful; and the application he makes of his diſcoveries in the animal œconomy to the various diſeaſes that afflict the human frame, is highly uſeful and curious.

Dr. Black, in chemiſtry, has alſo great merit; as have all the other profeſſors in their different departments; to mention whoſe names might do honour to theſe Sketches, but would add nothing to their diſtinguiſhed merit.

Indeed the inſtitution of the philoſophical, medical, antiquarian, and other learned ſocieties in Scotland; brings honour to their founders, and no doubt will more and more ennoble our country and improve uſeful knowledge.

I have thus treated of Scotch Learning apart from Engliſh, not from any invidious diſtinction; but ſolely for the purpoſe of throwing, under one ſhort view, the genius of a country that has been long famous; but, from her former unhappy diviſion from the greateſt, richeſt, and moſt populous part of Britain; from her conſequent want of commerce and political exertion, ſhe hath been often, though unjuſtly, deemed incapable of every improvement. But the bleſſings of Union, it is preſumed, have removed all obſtacles to her induſtry, proſperity, and reputation.

SECTION II.

Character of Thomſon, author of the Seaſons.

THOMSON's ſtyle, in the Seaſons, is elegant and ſublime; yet ſomewhat incorrect. He delineates, with great juſtneſs, many parts of nature; but his deſcriptions are often too minute and diffuſe, whence their force is leſſened.

He indulges in digreſſions; and, for a deſcriptive poem, perhaps gives way too often to reflexions on human life. His Natural Philoſophy ſeems none of the beſt; for he adopts Burnet's Theory of the Deluge in his Spring; and aſks the winds (in his Winter:)

" In what far diſtant region of the ſky,
Huſh'd in deep ſilence, ſleep ye, when 'tis calm?"

He bears ſome reſemblance to Lucretius, in his tender ſtrokes, digreſſions, and the moral concluſions of his Books; but he wants his ſimplicity and uniform purity.

His principal excellence is ſtrength and ſublimity; his deficiency, want of harmony and purity of expreſſion. His perſonification of Rains and Dews, Coolneſs and Heat, in his Summer, is unnatural; on other occaſions his diction is ſullied by crouded and mixed metaphors. See his poem on Liberty.

His want of harmony is often obſervable, in his uſe of a flat word at the end of a line, or where the pauſe falls; in not ſufficiently diverſifying his pauſes, or now and then mixing agreeable diſcords, which, in blank verſe, has a particular beauty.

The juſtneſs of the above remark will ſtrongly appear by comparing a certain number of lines in the Seaſons with an equal number in Milton; in which laſt beſides a ſuperiority of

poetical fire, there is alſo a much greater force and variety of harmony.

Theſe faults, however, in Thomſon, are eaſily over balanced by a variety of plea ng, natural, and ſublime beauties, which will ever render the Seaſons one of the moſt delightful Poems in the world. I ſhall mention a few of them.

His deſcription of Love, in the Spring, is animated and pathetic, and equal to Virgil's or Lucretius's on the ſame ſubject. It has even more of romance and enthuſiaſm; and one muſt ſuppoſe that Thomſon, as well as his predeceſſors, had felt the tender paſſion in no common degree to have deſcribed it in ſo lively a manner.

There are two paſſages in the Spring, as they ſtand in the firſt edition, although omitted in the later ones, that are eminently beautiful and ſublime:

"High from the ſummit of a craggy cliff,
Hung o'er the green ſea, grumbling at its baſe,
The royal eagle draws his young, reſolv'd
To try them at the ſun. Strong pounc'd and bright
As burniſh'd day, they up the blue ſky wind,
Leaving dull ſight below, and with fixt gaze
Drink in their native noon; the father-king
Claps his glad pinions and approves the birth."

The other paſſage, though abruptly introduced, is equally remarkable for piety and ſublimity; deſcribing the power of God, as follows:

"His grandeur in the heavens; the ſun and moon,
Whether that fires the day, or falling this
Pours out a lucid ſoftneſs o'er the night,
Are but a beam from him. The glittering ſtars
By the deep ear of meditation heard,
Still in their midnight-watches ſing of him.
He nods a calm. The tempeſt blows his wrath,
Roots up the foreſt and o'erturns the main.

The thunder is his voice, and the red flaſh
His ſpeedy ſword of juſtice. At his touch
The mountains flame. He ſhakes the ſolid earth,
And rocks the nations. Nor in theſe alone,
In every common inſtance God is ſeen."

In his Summer, the addreſs to the ſun, with the deſcription of luxuriant climes within the tropics, the progreſs of the huge rivers there, and the thunder-ſtorm, are all inſtances of the true ſublime, and are remarkable for a vein of bold and rich painting. The Epiſodes of Amelia and Muſidora are finely wrought and ſeaſonably introduced; the former remarkable for its pathos, the latter for its delicacy and beauty.

The origin and progreſs of the Nile is deſcribed with true poetical ſpirit in the following paſſage:

" The treaſures theſe, hid from the bounded ſearch
Of ancient knowledge; whence, with annual pomp,
Rich king of floods! o'erflows the ſwelling Nile.
From his two ſprings, in Gojam's ſunny realm,
Pure-welling out, he through the lucid lake
Of fair Dambea rolls his infant ſtream.
There, by the Naiads nurs'd, he ſports away
His playful youth, amid the fragrant iſles,
That with unfading verdure ſmile around.
Ambitious, thence the manly river breaks;
And gathering many a flood, and copious fed
With all the mellowed treaſures of the ſky,
Winds in progreſſive majeſty along:
Through ſplendid kingdoms now devolves his maze,
Now wanders wild o'er ſolitary tracts
Of life-deſerted ſand; till, glad to quit
The joyleſs deſert, down the Nubian rocks
From thundering ſteep to ſteep, he pours his urn,
And Egypt joys beneath the ſpreading wave."

In his Autumn there is the mild majeſty with the ſweet gravity of the Seaſon. The calm proſpect of the fields ready

for harveſt, the ſerene blue of the ſky, the reaping ſcene, with the Story of Lavinia, are poetical, natural, and amuſing; but the harveſt-ſtorm, the ſtag and fox-hunting, eſpecially the laſt, are moſt finiſhed, and place our author's deſcriptive powers in the ſtrongeſt light. The praiſes of Scotland, with the panegyric on a philoſophical country-life agreeably diverſify the ſubject, and ſuit the ſeaſon that ſeems peculiarly formed for contemplation and philoſophy.

The Winter poſſeſſes ſo many poetic beauties that the bare mention of them would fill many pages. The grand and terrible ſeem to predominate, ſometimes the pathetic intervenes; but all ſeems laboured, animated, and uniformly ſupported; ſo that if the author had never compoſed another, this poem was enough to ſecure his immortality.

I beg leave here to quote two paſſages, the one awfully deſcriptive of Winter near the pole; the other pleaſingingly poetical and deſcriptive of winter-amuſements at home.

" ——————Nought around
Strikes the ſad eye, but deſarts loſt in ſnow;
And heavy-loaded groves, and ſolid floods,
That ſtretch, athwart the ſolitary waſte,
Their icy horrors to the frozen main;
And chearleſs towns far diſtant, never bleſt,
Save when its annual courſe the caravan
Bends to the golden coaſt of rich Cathay; †
With news of human kind.——
Still preſſing on beyond Tonhea's lake,
And Hecla flaming through a waſte of ſnow,
And fartheſt Greenland, to the pole itſelf,
Where, failing gradual, life itſelf goes out,
The Muſe expands her ſolitary flight;
And hovering o'er the wild, ſtupendous ſcene,
Beholds new ſeas beneath another ſky.—

† China

Thron'd in his palace of cerulean ice,
Here Winter holds his unrejoicing court;
And through his airy hall the loud miſrule
Of driving tempeſts is for ever heard."

"The city ſwarms intenſe. The public haunt
Full of each theme, and warm with mixt diſcourſe
Hums indiſtinct. The ſons of riot flow
Down the looſe ſtream of falſe enchanted joy
To ſwift deſtruction.———
Up ſprings the dance along the lighted dome,
Mix'd and evolv'd a thouſand ſprightly ways.
The glittering court effuſes every pomp;
The circle deepens; beam'd from gaudy robes,
Tapers and ſparkling gems, and radiant eyes,
A ſoft effulgence o'er the palace waves.
Dread o'er the ſcene, the ghoſt of Hamlet ſtalks,
Othello rages; poor Monimia mourns;
And Belvidera pours her ſoul in love."

In a word, though his Winter was the firſt poem Thomſom wrote, it is undoubtedly his beſt. The hiſtorical digreſſions ſuit the ſeaſon, and agreeably relieve the mind after ſuch a blaze of deſcription. And the Hymn at the end, in reſpect of ſublimity, is equal at leaſt to Milton's, which it imitates.

To conclude, it may be added, to the praiſe of Thomſon, that as he was the firſt in our language that ſtruck out a new path of bold and manly deſcription, ſo it appears he has had none to follow him; and he ſtands, as yet, without a rival; as a painter of nature, (or the material world), both in her great and ſmaller forms, he certainly ſtands without an equal in modern times.

Dr. Armſtrong, his friend and cotemporary, comes the neareſt to his ſtyle and diction. He is, indeed, more pure and correct, but falls ſhort in ſublimity. The Poem on Health riſes far above mediocrity; and ſhows what the

author could have done had he dedicated more of his time to the poetic art.

His power in deſcription appears in the following lines:

" Oh when the growling winds contend, and all
The ſounding foreſt fluctuates in the ſtorm;
To ſink in warm repoſe, and hear the winds
Howl o'er the ſteady battlements, delights
Above the luxury of vulgar ſleep †!"

Thomſon was born in the beginning of the preſent century, and died of a fever brought on by a cold, in his 48th year. He ſeems to have been a man of the moſt amiable temper, moral, benevolent; a friend to liberty, to mankind, and to virtue: in a word, a moſt excellent poet, and, what is of more conſequence, a moſt excellent man.

SECTION III.

Lives and Characters of ſome modern Scotch Poets.

ALLAN RAMSAY was born of poor parentage in Edinburgh, about the beginning of the preſent century. He was a ſtrong inſtance how far natural parts will go with little aſſiſtance from education. He himſelf confeſſes that he underſtood Horace but faintly in the original, and he ſeems to glory in this ignorance.

Countenanced and encouraged by the great, the fair, the young, and the gay, he tuned the Scottiſh reed to a variety of ſtrains expreſſive of his temper, which was ſprightly and joyous.

† " I was well acquainted with him. He was a man of great wit and " humour upon occaſions; and poſſeſſed a very fine taſte, but extremely " nice and faſtidious. He was too much a man of pleaſure to purſue " poetical ſtudies to any extent." G.

Some of his ſongs, however, are highly characteriſtic of tenderneſs, and ſuit well the pathos of the tunes to which they are ſet. The manners of the Scottiſh ſhepherds are alſo well deſcribed in his paſtoral Comedy of the Gentle Shepherd, which, though written in rhyme, a vehicle unſuited to comedy, muſt be allowed to be natural, and upon the whole juſt *.

A talent for humour forms a conſpicuous part, both of the convivial and poetic character of Allan; he loved a boon companion and a chearful glaſs: Like Horace he laughed away care over a good fire, and a flowing bowl; and on thoſe occaſions he gave full vent to his wit, which flowed very freely. Except a few of his ſongs, his pieces of humour are his beſt; his elegies are full of it, and his continuation of Chriſt's Kirk on the Green, is written with ſpirit.

As he gradually roſe to credit by his writings, eſpecially his ſongs, which pleaſed every body, he ſet on foot a circulating library, which was the firſt of the kind known in this country. He died 1743.

William Hamilton of Bangour, was a gentleman of a reſpectable family, and a captain of the army. He was the friend and cotemporary of the Scotch Guarini, Allan Ramſay, whom he outlived by ſeveral years.

He is one of thoſe writers of moderate talents, that pleaſe more than the moſt brilliant geniuſes. If he is ſometimes flat, he is oftener lively and elegant. His verſes are eaſy, and flow with a ſimple propriety, that is almoſt always pleaſing. His imagination was of that kind that was neither highly elevated by the ſublime, nor deeply affected by the tender. His manner is of the ſoft anacreontic kind; and he may be placed in the middle rank of our lyric bards.

His Odes to Contemplation and Fancy are among his beſt pieces: he compoſed ſeveral ſongs; among others the Braes of Yarrow in the old Scotch dialect.

* "I will venture to ſay it is the beſt and trueſt paſtoral Comedy pro-"duced in Britain." G.

In his Ode on the Change of Seaſons, addreſſed to a young lady, he has the following natural and pictureſque lines.

"Now Winter from the frozen north,
Drives his iron chariot forth:
Caſt up thy eyes, how bleak and bare,
He wanders on the tops of Yare.
His griſly hand in icy chains,
Fair Twedles ſilver flood conſtrains.
Behold his footſteps dire are ſeen,
Confeſt in every withering green!"

Hamilton was a poliſhed ſcholar, well verſed in ancient and modern languages. He was, moreover a philoſopher and adorned his poetry, with frequent alluſions to phyſics and morals *.

Dr. Thomas Blacklock was born at Annan 1721. He loſt his ſight by the ſmall-pox when he was five months old, ſo that he could have no remembrance of the objects of ſight which he deſcribes with ſuch life and propriety in his poems. He is one of the moſt correct of our Scotch bards. The beſt of his poetical pieces ſeem to be his imitation of the 104th Pſalm, ſome of his paſtorals, Urania, the Coquet, Ode to Benevolence, and his Complaint on his own ſituation upon the loſs of his father, his blindneſs, and his narrow eſcape from drowning; which laſt in particular, is written in a very elevated and affecting ſtrain of poetry.

Dr. James Beattie was born at Laurence-kirk in the Mearns. Upon the publication of his firſt poems, his genius became known, and he was ſoon after advanced to a profeſſorſhip in the univerſity of Aberdeen. Beſides poems, he is author of ſeveral treatiſes, particularly the Eſſay on Poetry and Muſic as they affect the mind; the one on Ludicrous Writing; the Eſſay on Truth againſt the Scep-

* Being engaged from principle in the rebellion 1745, he wrote the Tears of Scotland, in reſentment of ſome acts of cruelty, after the battle of Culloden. G.

tics, for which he received the royal penſion; and the late Eſſays on Memory and Imagination; with an excellent and ingenious Theory on Language.

The Doctor ſeems to entertain too mean an opinion of his earlier poetical pieces, as being juvenile and incorrect. They, however, poſſeſs many fine paſſages, bearing marks of that ſweet and ſublime genius, that afterwards ſhone ſo brightly in the Minſtrel.

William Julius Meikle is author of an Elegy on Mary Queen of Scots, a pathetic and deſcriptive piece, alſo of Pollio an elegiac ode in the ſame ſtrain. His tranſlation of the Luſiad is ſmooth and elegant, though ſomewhat diffuſe. He has ſince that time publiſhed a poem called Almeydahill, written in Spain.

Michael Bruce was born in an obſcure village near Kinroſs, of ſimple and innocent, though mean parents, who yet bleſſed him with a liberal education at Edinburgh univerſity, where he completed a courſe of philoſophy; but died in his 21ſt year. He was the author of ſeveral poems, a neat edition of which has been lately publiſhed. Among theſe the principal are, Sir James the Roſs, Lochleven a poem, and the Ode to the Cuckow, which laſt has been claimed by the Reverend Mr. Logan at Leith, the author of Runnamede a tragedy, and ſome other pieces.

Robert Alves, the author of theſe Sketches, was born at Elgin, in the end of the year 1745. In 1766, he took his degrees in philoſophy, at Aberdeen. And in 1782 he publiſhed, at Edinburgh, a volume of original poems, moſtly conſiſting of odes and elegies. His tranſlation of Catullus's principal work, "The Marriage of Peleus and Thetis," was finiſhed in two or three weeks, a much leſs ſpace of time, than ever he found himſelf capable of executing works of his own invention. The tender complaint of Ariadne then accorded with ſome ſtrings in the tone of his ſoul, which firſt ſuggeſted and made him enter into the ſpirit of that beautiful poem. He has ſince publiſhed, Edinburgh, a poem, in two parts; and the Weeping Bard, a poem, in

ſixteen cantos; which have been well received, ſo far as they have been known *.

Mallet and Armſtrong were both Scotchmen, the friends and followers of Thomſon; but the latter only copied his manner with good ſucceſs. The former, however, reſcues his memory from oblivion, by two ſongs that do him more honour than all his other works. William and Margaret,

* The authors of the Engliſh Review have given the following character of the poem called the Weeping Bard.

"We have ſeldom read any production of the plaintive and melancholy kind in which we found greater variety of tender ſentiment, more poetical imagery, and more genuine pathos, than in that now before us. We ſhall preſent our readers with a ſpecimen:

IV.

"Hail rural pleaſures ever new!
How, when a ſchool-boy did I woo
Your ſimple ſweets! hail'd the bleſt day,
That gave me back the balmy May!
Enraptur'd heard the wild lark ſing,
To uſher in the laughing Spring;
Mark'd the ſky ting'd with ſofter blue,
While bland and warm the zephyrs flew;
Watch'd the firſt blow of daiſies wild,
Or ſnow-drop, Flora's earlieſt child!
Now drew the breath of freſh-mown hay,
Or flowering beans, or birchen ſpray,
Now with the tender lambs made all my play.

V.

Anon when Summer, in her chariot bright,
O'er heaven and earth effus'd a fiercer light,
I ſought the ſweet-briar's cool perfume,
Or walk'd the golden banks of broom:
Now wading catch'd the finny prey;
Now to the bowery thicket held my way,
Liſtening the linnet's artleſs ſong,
Or even to rob her callow young,
Would ſometimes dare! though not with fell intent!
—I only wiſh'd ſome woodland lay;
While careful, in the wiry frame ypent,
I fed the clamorous brood with dainties many a day.

and Edgar and Emma, are effuſions of nature and tenderneſs, that will ever be admired.

VI.

Next when pale Autumn, like a matron ſtaid,
Came penſive on with clear but ſober eye;
I rang'd the yellow fields, and muſing ſtray'd,
Rapt in ſad ſerious moods of ecſtacy!
Even then did nature ſtrike my ſtripling-eye,
And touch my boſom with a poets fire!
'Twas then I firſt eſſay'd the Dorian lyre,
Though in rude ſtrains of rural minſtrelſy:—
One bleſt October morn,
Under the haw'red thorn!
Juſt when yon abby's moſs-clad ſpire,
'Gan to catch Sol's golden fire,
While, melting to the brightening air,
The fine-ſpun webs of goſſamer,
Diſperſing with the light-heel'd dew,
Sail'd in long trails through ether blue.
Oh golden and propitious time,
To woo the willing muſe ſublime!
Full ſixteen years had then matur'd my ripening prime.

VII.

Laſt when hoar Winter came with ſweepy ſway
To rule the plain; how gladden'd it my ſoul,
Round the corn-heaps to run in gleeful play,
Or urge the ſnow-balls gathering as they roll!
Or trap the pidgeon blue in tangling toils!
The black-bird, red-breaſt, or the chattering jay!
Now all theſe boyiſh ſports are gone for ay!
Nor more each coming year with changeful paſtime ſmiles!

VIII.

Bleſt, and innocent, and free,
Void of care and penurie!
Oh give me back once more ſuch halcyon-days,
Far from the world's tumultuous ways!
Oh! give me back once more ſuch golden time,
And I will yield thee up the willing muſe ſublime!"

"The author deſcants on the ſubject of love with the ſame ſenſibi-
"lity which he evinces to the diſtreſſes of genius; but the paſſion he cele-
"brates is animated with virtue, and he treats it with equal ardor and de-
"licacy."

See *Engliſh Review*, 1791.

SECTION IV.

Of the Scotch Ballads.

THE peculiar excellence of the Scotch ballads has been particularly noticed by Drs. Percy and Beattie, Meſſrs. Pinkerton, Callendar, and others. Indeed too much can hardly be ſaid on their merit, which might afford ſubject for a large diſſertation. I ſhall only make a few remarks.

What particularly diſtinguiſhes them is, firſt, a beautiful ſimplicity peculiar to ſome of them; a ſweet amorous tenderneſs, to others; a certain wild grandeur and ſublimity, to many.

Several of them are excellent even in point of compoſition; and have an antique turn of language and ſentiment that greatly enhances their value. Moſt of them are pictures of the age in which they were compoſed; and are either remarkable for deſcribing ſome tragic or heroic action peculiar to the times; or ſome ſcenes of low life full of ſingular humour and native ſimplicity.

The famous old ballad of Chevy Chace ſo much celebrated by Addiſon, and mutually claimed both by Scots and Engliſh, is, I think, of inferior merit to ſome of Engliſh production; ſuch as the Friar of Orders Gray, Harpalus, Babes of the Wood, and others that are all poſſeſt of moſt eminent pathos, and beautiful ſimplicity of compoſition.

Harpalus has peculiar merit, as being the ground-work of Engliſh paſtorals. Upon it Spenſer formed his Shepherd's Calendar; although much inferior to the original in ſimplicity and tenderneſs.

The Scotch tragic or heroic ballads that are moſt remarkable for their pathos and fine compoſition, are Hardyknute,

Gill Morrice, Edom o'Gordon, Lady Bothwel's Lament, the Bonny Erle of Moray, Frendret-Hall; Sir James the Roſs, Flowers of the Foreſt; which laſt, in particular, breathes ſuch an air of ſad lamentation as I cannot deſcribe. It is the moſt genuine effuſion of heart-felt ſorrow on a ſolemn occaſion, and expreſſed in wild paſtoral ſtrains extremely characteriſtic of the country in which it was compoſed.

The compoſition of Hardyknute is truely excellent, altho' its air is now loſt; ſo is that of Gill Morrice, but its air is retained, though of the two it ſeems the moſt ancient poem. Both of them muſt have been the production of ſome eminent genius; probably ſome minſtrel or ſtrolling bard, who, full of poetic fire, though careleſs of fame, poured forth thoſe excellent compoſitions to ſuit ſome particular air among his favourite melodies.

Of all poetical compoſitions whatever, it ſeems, the Scotch ſongs expreſs the paſſion of love in the moſt pathetic manner. Neither Theocritus nor Virgil in their Paſtorals; nor Mimnermus, Tibullus, and Propertius in their Elegies; ever breathed ſuch tender and ſweetly-amorous ditties. They are the native unadorned language of the heart; ſometimes the words are beautiful; but when theſe are ſimple even to rudeneſs, they are ſtill ſo ſupported, when ſung to the original airs, as to have an appearance of dignity along with perfect ſimplicity.

Some tunes are inexpreſſibly characteriſtic of tenderneſs, complaint, and a ſweet amorous melancholy, ſuch as: An thou wert my Ain Thing; Alloa-houſe; Buſh aboon Traquair; Gala Water; I'll never leave Thee; Auld Rob Morris; Fy on the Wars; Ew-bughts Marion.

The following have a degree of ſweetneſs, and even ſomething of grandeur peculiar to themſelves, to wit: Birks of Invermay; Roſlin-Caſtle; Ettrick-Banks; Tweed-Side; Broom of Cowden-knows; Braes of Ballendine; Lochaber no More; the Laſs of Patie's Mill; the Laſt time I came o'er the Muir.

All of them, however, have their words peculiarly adapted to the tunes, and though ſome of them are rude enough, yet many of them are of good compoſition; and well ſuited to the natural wildneſs of the original airs.

Thoſe Scotch ſongs or airs that are peculiarly ſuited to dancing, have a more briſk and ſprightly turn. Their ſpirit is both exhilarating and pathetic. They come generally under the name of reels, jigs, or country-dances. Their manner is perhaps ſuperior to any other in rouzing the ſpirits to mirth and chearfulneſs; and of them there is vaſt variety.

Even a vein of native chearfulneſs pervades many of thoſe paſtoral tunes that more particularly belong to the ſouth of Scotland; juſtly denominated the Arcadia of Britain, and the native ſeat of moſt of the pleaſing airs already mentioned.

Low down in the Broom; Saw nae ye my Peggy; Wat ye wha I met Yeſtreen; O'er the muir to Maggy; I canna come ilka day to Woo: Some of theſe are more, ſome leſs pathetic; but all have a certain wild and exhilarating ſtrain peculiarly adapted to rouze the ſpirits, and enliven dancing.

The Wawking of the Faulds is a paſtoral air of the chearful kind, that ſeems to me to put one in mind of a ſunſhine-morning in a paſtoral country, rejoicing in mirth, muſic, and rural innocence.

Others are of a more humorous or comic turn, ſuch as, the Gaberlunzie Man; Chriſt's Kirk on the Green; the Wife of Achtermuchty; Take your Auld Cloak about You: The two firſt are particulary humorous and excellent; and are believed to have been compoſed by James the V of Scotland, who indeed ſeems to have had an equal turn for ſingular adventure and natural humour.

Mr. Tytler, in his well-written diſſertation on Scotch muſic, in Arnot's Hiſtory of Edinburgh, ſeems to think the above two pieces the compoſition of James I. This king certainly invented many original airs, and was celebrated even

in Italy for the uncommon excellence of his muſic. Yet as his ſtyle is ſaid to have been of the plaintive or melancholy kind; I am rather of opinion, with ſeveral others, that thoſe truely comic ſongs belong to James the V; as being particularly expreſſive of his humour, and frolickſome way of life. Beſides, their ſtyle, however antiquated it may appear to our age, wears too modern an air to be ſuppoſed compatible with ſo early an æra as that of James I.

Even Gawn Douglas, biſhop of Dunkeld, a little latter than Chaucer in England, and cotemporary with James the IV of Scotland; and not long prior to the æra of Shakeſpear and Milton, writes in a ſtyle much more antiquated than any of thoſe performances juſt now mentioned; which inclines one to believe that they are not only of a much latter date than the age of James I, but even of Chaucer and Douglas, whoſe ſtyle is far more obſolete than almoſt any we ſee in the moſt antiquated of our Scotch poems.

I have only to add, on the ſubject of Scotch ballads, that the ſublime or grand ſtyle more particularly belongs to the muſic of the north of Scotland. Perhaps ſome of the ſongs already mentioned, come under this deſcription. The northern marches and pibrochs are all of a wild and elevating, or ſwelling ſtrain. Often a deep or ſublime melancholy prevails in them. Yet the reels (or ſtrathſpeys, as they are ſometimes termed), though of a moſt pathetic turn, are highly exalting to the ſpirits, and peculiarly ſuited to a certain wild, though graceful dance, much practiſed in the highlands.

There are, likewiſe, ſeveral heroic or tragic ballads of very ancient date, that, undoubtedly belong to this region; moſt of them of a lofty or melancholy ſtrain, peculiar to the country and people.

In fine, whoever were the inventors, either of the northern or ſouthern muſic of Scotland, had an inimitable genius in touching thoſe chords that moſt powerfully reach the heart; and rouze, enliven, melt, or tranquillize the paſ-

ſions with an infinite and endleſs variety of the moſt enchanting melodies.

Of all pleaſures muſic is one of the moſt delightful, and at the ſame time the moſt innocent. It tranſports without hurting the tranquillity of the ſoul. It warms and raviſhes the heart without debaſing it. It even refines the paſſions and elevates the fancy to a high degree; and, next to poetry itſelf, is the moſt elegant and rational of all entertainments that affect the heart and touch the paſſions.

LITERARY ESSAYS,

CONTAINING

COMPARISONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

ANCIENT AND MODERN AUTHORS;

WITH

VARIOUS OTHER SUBJECTS OF LITERATURE.

LITERARY ESSAYS.

ESSAY I.

Milton, Shakeſpear, Homer, and Virgil compared.

NOTWITHSTANDING what Dr. Johnſon† has ſaid in regard to Milton's want of harmony, his harſh and unnatural language, and even his want of native genius, and original invention, I will boldly venture to affirm, and riſk all my pretenſions to judgment in theſe matters, upon the affirmation, that Milton, in every eſſential qualification of a poet, is as much an original genius as either Shakeſpear or Homer; his language and harmony, perhaps, more poliſhed than that of the former; and his ſublimity and invention equal to that of the latter.

It is certain Shakeſpear poſſeſſed the higheſt degree of natural genius. Comprehenſive and vaſt, he takes hold of nature in all her varieties of human character: He catches her in every ſhape; the ludicrous, the ſolemn, the beautiful, the terrible. He even penetrates the wilds of romance, and

† I wiſh it to be believed that my frequent mention of the above gentleman with diſapprobation, proceeds from no perſonal or national picque; but ſolely from a regard to truth and juſtice, and a ſacred regard to the memory of the firſt geniuſes in England, that have been ſo groſsly traduced and abuſed, in a manner that degrades learning and criticiſm, and throws diſgrace upon the age.

bodies forth, with his magic pencil, in this airy region, characters unknown, unheard of. A new race of creatures ſpeak and move with ſtrange limbs, ſtrange ſenſations; all wild and extravagant, yet delightfully marvellous, ſtrangely natural, and highly worthy of the matchleſs author.

On the other hand, Homer poſſeſſes the creative powers of poeſy equal to the former; and though he comprehends not his varieties, yet he dignifies his inventions with more of majeſty and importance by his adoption of the pagan mythology, which, above every thing, is moſt ſuited to embelliſh an epic work, admits of vaſt variety, and throws into it more of natural dignity and intereſt than our modern ſyſtems admit of.

Milton, therefore, in this reſpect, only is inferior to Homer; not by any inferiority of genius; for in every other eſſential point, he is his equal, if not ſuperior. His ideas and expreſſions are equally ſublime, and of high invention; his characters more exalted, more out of nature's common courſe, and more difficult in deſcription. Yet they are uniformly ſupported, and never ſtoop, like Homer's deities, to any thing mean or debaſed. Their thoughts, words, figure, and motions, are always elevated, important, ſolemn, or divine.

The deſign of the Paradiſe Loſt is great, the moral excellent, the art wonderful; and they are only to be matched by that glow of expreſſion, that glorious profuſion of imagery, that fullneſs of harmony, that noble greatneſs of ſentiment and morality, which do honour to his nation, his language, and even to human nature itſelf. In fine, I look upon him next to thoſe two I have mentioned, as the moſt wonderful of her productions in the poetic province; or perhaps in any other intellectual department, where extraordinary genius is requiſite; a genius majeſtic, grave, bold, and vaſt; and that expands itſelf almoſt to the full extent of nature herſelf.

Perhaps Newton, in philoſophy, is like Milton in poetry. A native invention, a vaſt range of thought, a gravity of

judgment, a comprehenſive and penetrating inſpection of nature, joined to the utmoſt modeſty, patience, and perſeverance of inveſtigation, diſtinguiſh the intellectual operations of each. Both ſoared to heaven on the wings of imagination, guarded by profound judgment, with this difference, that Newton's inventions ariſe from the known laws of attraction, which are extended, by analogy and a natural gradation of reaſoning, from our earth and the moon, to Saturn and the utmoſt range of the ſolar ſyſtem; comprehending even comets in their moſt excentric excurſions. Thus he eſtabliſhes, on a new and firm foundation, the wonderful œconomy of the heavenly orbs, with all their various revolutions through the immenſity of ſpace.

On the other hand, Milton heated with the infuſions of oriental imagery and ſcriptural information, has, upon this ground, deſcribed the fall of man, the wars of angels, the creation of the world, with all the glorious ſcenery and machinery of the Paradiſe Loſt, in a ſtyle of poetry ſo great and ſublime, as to preſent a new and vaſt creation to our view. The glory of heaven, the terror of hell, the bliſs of paradiſe, with the ſupernatural characters either of a celeſtial or infernal kind, are all diſplayed in intereſting though awful colours, all brought forward in full view, all connected together under one great deſign, which at once aſtoniſhes, inſtructs, and delights us.

Upon the whole I am of opinion, that the main difference betwixt him and Shakeſpear lies in expreſſion; the thoughts of both are equally great; the latter perhaps is more metaphorical, more pregnant in alluſions; but the other is more correct, more claſſically elegant. In tragedy both have ſtrong language and marked characters; but Shakeſpear is more varied and natural, deſcribing every ſhade and gradation of character, and riſing and falling with his language in proportion. On the other hand, Milton, like Homer, is uniformly great; or if he deſcends, his ſtyle, though plain, is ſtill grave, ſententious, and in ſome degree

elegant. Even the ſpeeches of the Deity, the moſt exceptionable part of Paradiſe Loſt, though metaphyſical, are remarkable for juſtneſs of thought, and a ſingularly conciſe elegance.

Milton's defects are the faults of the age: An affectation of learning, witticiſm, or play upon words, and a ſhow of metaphyſics inconſiſtent with poetry. As for his digreſſions, they are venial offences in ſo great a genius; and though in theſe he has deviated from his great originals, Homer and Virgil; yet they give variety to his poem, and are ſo valuable in point of compoſition, that we would not part with them at any rate.

Theſe rudeneſſes, both in Milton and Shakeſpear, which I call the faults of the age, have one advantage, that they pleaſe the mind by ſuggeſting views of the progreſs of literature. Genius is always rude in her firſt excurſions. Warm and full of enthuſiaſm, ſhe ſoars above the rules of art, which after-ages, from time and cool reflexion, are left to eſtabliſh.

Genius, in Shakeſpear, particularly, ſhot wild and free. Unconverſant with critics, or even with the ancients, nature in him had full ſcope, and was confined in her bold excurſions only by that good ſenſe and native ſagacity which always diſtinguiſh a great genius. His negligences of time and place in the drama, his ſometimes giving way to quibble and falſe wit, with a little of hyperbolical, obſcure, or affected expreſſion, are a few of thoſe luxuriances of the poet which are partly chargeable on the times, or his unacquaintance with ſome of the true and genuine critics of antiquity; but are totally loſt and eclipſed in the ſplendor of his ſuperlative merit.

Perhaps Shakeſpear's want of claſſical learning was an advantage to his genius, though a loſs to his taſte. His manner is the more original, that he had not, like Milton, imbibed the ſpirit and language of the ancients.—The aid of rules and the formal leſſons of critics may be of ſervice to inferior genius, but they conſtrain ſuperior genius; as the

lame ſupport themſelves beſt by crutches, which would encumber ſound and perfect limbs; or as the ſhort-ſighted need the aſſiſtance of glaſſes, while good eyes ſee better without them.

Shakeſpear's reading, however, ſeems immenſe; his knowledge of pagan antiquities and mythology is quite juſt and exact; characters ancient and modern lye open to his view; ſo that at a glance he ſeems to have catched every advantage that extenſive obſervation or hiſtory could afford; all which he has applied with admirable facility and unerring judgment on every occaſion. Even his comedies, though ſeemingly drawn from living characters and the moſt natural incidents, abound in alluſions that ſhow his vaſt reading.

But his hiſtorical plays, the more ancient, as well as the modern, are perfectly characteriſtic of their different perſonages: I inſtance his two plays of Julius Cæſar, and Antony and Cleopatra. This laſt, in particular, though little read and admired, is, nevertheleſs, one of his beſt pieces. Its characters, though various, are marked to the life, and ſupported through a variety of exhibition with equal ſpirit. Even the raving ſpeeches of Antony and Cleopatra, though at firſt view they may appear bombaſt or extravagance, will, upon due conſideration, be found highly proper to the characters, their deſperate ſituation, and the warm and figurative language of the country. We imagine ourſelves at Rome, at Alexandria; and ſee and hear the great perſonages of thoſe days, act and ſpeak in their real native characters. The language is excellent; and the moral of univerſal application.

The ſame may be ſaid of Macbeth, whoſe characters, though conſonant to the ſtricteſt informations of hiſtory, are led through a ſeries of action, that ſhows amazing invention. The diction is natural and his own; always ſignificant, eaſy, and unconſtrained; often figurative, yet ſtill natural: In fine, here, as in all things elſe, Shakeſpear evidences the native powers of a great genius. Uninſtructed by the

ancients, he is even, in language, generally more natural, and almoſt always more forcible than moſt other writers. In dramatic poetry, eſpecially, there is no author that nearly equals the force of Shakeſpear. Like Demoſthenes, his eloquence is always cloſe and vehement; and full of life and energy.

Even in the compoſition of an epiſtle, ſhort *billet-doux*, or ordinary proſe-converſation, Shakeſpear's language is extremely characteriſtic and proper. It is, alſo neat and conciſe; ſome lively figure or alluſion intervenes to give it ſpirit, and if not highly elegant, it is always preciſe, pointed, and natural.

Upon the whole, both Milton and Shakeſpear have only left to ſucceeding ages to prune their luxuriances, or avoid their leſſer faults, but not to equal their merits. Having already occupied the vaſt regions of nature and fancy, and thence ſcattered their communications with unſparing hand, they have ſhown poſterity to what heights human intellect can riſe, but have hardly left a poſſibility of imitation; or of following them in any of thoſe daring flights, to which a divine genius only can aſpire.

Nature is ſparing in her great productions. A thouſand years are hardly able to produce an Archimedes, a Galileo, or a Newton. Only one Homer aroſe in Greece, the moſt learned and elegant of all nations. Virgil was the higheſt effort of Roman genius; Taſſo and Arioſto of modern Italy; and perhaps Milton and Shakeſpear, will continue unrivalled in this country to remoteſt time.

What then is left to their ſucceſſors? Imitation, judgment, correctneſs, elegance. To ſome ſhort excurſions we, perhaps, are adequate, ſuch as an Ode, Elegy, a moral, paſtoral, or ſatyric, Poem: in all of theſe we may boaſt to equal Greece or Rome. Even theſe, too, have their merit, and pleaſe from their fancy, humour, harmony, or elegance; but are much inferior to thoſe more noble exertions of genius juſt now mentioned, thoſe unbounded delineations o human character and action, ſupported with ſuch continued

pomp of language and harmony through a great work, ſuch as a tragedy or epic poem, as renders each, according to the opinion of the beſt critics, the higheſt effort of human genius.

Let us now conſider Homer and Virgil. This laſt, inferior in invention both to Homer and the other two we have endeavoured to deſcribe, is chiefly valuable for his language and ſentiment. The latter is tender and moral; the former correct and elegant. His manner is even pompous, but without oſtentation. His words and ſentences are lifted with a ſwell above thoſe of Homer, and poſſeſs a magnificence that appears the effects of ſtudy and labour; while the genius of the Græcian bard riſes more in the thought than the expreſſion, which laſt being ſimple and vivacious, has thence more of true ſublimity; yet is apt to ſtrike leſs at firſt, as being deſtitute of that pomp of diction for which Virgil is more remarkable.

Indeed, ſuch is the ſuperiority of the Greek language in the hands of Homer, ſuch the ſweetneſs and commanding dignity of its harmony, ſo exactly do the ſound and poſition of every word correſpond to the ſenſe, that even, in ſpite of his ſimplicity, he poſſeſſes more of grandeur than Virgil. From ſimplicity I exclude not metaphors and ſimilies, for Homer abounds in theſe even more than the other, which, joined to his conciſeneſs, and harmony, give ſuch energy and fire to his expreſſion.

Of all ancient writers, Homer excels moſt in deſcription of characters; and we ſee that each of his heroes has a different one, differently ſupported, and peculiarly belonging to himſelf; ſo that from a ſingle motion or word belonging to a particular perſon, an obſerving and an intelligent reader can eaſily diſcern, previous to all information, to whom that word or motion belongs. This is one of Shakeſpeare's great excellencies; and there is no higher mark of true genius, than to copy character with ſuch juſtneſs, and to do it with ſuch variety.

It is in vain to look for this in Virgil; although excellent in deſcription, he wants character almoſt altogether.—Eneas's is but an inſipid one, without much of life or nature; and intereſts us but little, becauſe, perhaps, it is too good, too uniform, and too little marked with the paſſions and frailties of human nature. Dido's is much more intereſting; and exhibits the effects of love on a violent female temper (ſuch as the Tyrian or African women might be thought to poſſeſs) in a very natural manner: Not to mention the ſublimity as well as pathos diſplayed in the working up the different ſtrokes and circumſtances of this character. There are, however, a few others that deſerve to be marked, ſuch as Camilla, Juturna, the gallant Pallas, Turnus, Lauſus; and the fiery and atheiſtical Mezentius, which laſt is the prototype to the Argante of Taſſo. In all theſe Virgil is an original; but his machinery is extremely ſcanty, and pretty much borrowed from Homer, as are alſo his ſimilies, although he often improves them.

Yet Virgil's want of character may not ſo much be the fault of his genius as of his circumſtances, and I would trace the cauſe thus: Homer lived in an early age, when the manners of mankind were unpoliſhed, ſimple, and undebauched by the cuſtom of courts. He "catched the living manners as they roſe;" and being a great traveller, he had occaſion to ſee human nature in all variety of ſhapes, which, on a mind happily turned for ſociety, and living much in it, muſt have been impreſt with ſtrong and irreſiſtable force.

Virgil, on the other hand, was a baſhful and retired man, ſhunning the world, and avoiding ſociety. He travelled none, except to Athens, where, I ſuppoſe, like a cloſe ſtudent, he minded nothing but his book: Beſides, human nature, in his time, was nature no more. A luxurious Auguſtus, and a finical and effeminate Mæcenas, influenced and debauched the court; and the court, the country. The Roman manners were then, indeed, in their higheſt poliſh; but it was an artificial one, and common to all. Virgil either ſaw no characters, or ſeeing them was diſguſted at

what was quite diſtorted and unnatural. He retired and ſtudied inanimate nature, and ſought for that pleaſure in the contemplation of the phyſical, which he no longer found in that of the moral world.

This ſtudy perfectly ſuited his genius and temper; and in this he has ſucceeded more than perhaps any other poet.—Nature ſeems to have let him into all her ſecrets; inſomuch that he talks not like an ordinary man, but like an oracle, or one truely inſpired. As proofs, I inſtance his admirable Georgics throughout, many paſſages in his paſtorals; in the Eneid, the ſea ſtorm raiſed by Juno, his beautiful deſcription of night and morning, of herbs, flowers and trees, of winter and ſpring, even to the very ſerpent that glides over the fields; with numberleſs other rural images and alluſions on all occaſions.

So that from what has been ſaid I would call Virgil the poet of nature; Homer that of human nature. Virgil excels in the deſcriptive; Homer in the ethic or moral. Virgil might have probably made a figure as a tragedian; but Homer, we are ſure, muſt have not only excelled in tragedy but likewiſe in comedy. We find this from the character of Therſites in the Iliad, which is treated in a truly comic manner: and we are alſo informed by Ariſtotle that his Margites, a comic work, was the firſt thing that led the way to comedy.

Virgil, it appears, was a man of a very ſerious and grave deportment; and as we find him to have been modeſt, reſerved, and a lover of ſolitude, this circumſtance muſt have added, indeed, greatly to the ſolemnity and ſublimity of his genius; but, however detracted from his knowledge of human nature. Conſequently his poems are ever ſedate and ſolemn, and all his characters much in the ſame ſtrain. He never deſcends into the familiar, like Homer, becauſe he wanted that gaiety of diſpoſition, which would have fitted him for all characters and companies; and which a poet muſt poſſeſs before he can give us a full and exact picture of human nature. Yet even this familiarity in Homer

(which only occaſionally occurs in the Iliad, but often in the Odyſſey) ſuſtains a degree of dignity. It is juſt ſuch a ſtyle, as a great and noble perſon would converſe in, at his hours of relaxation; it carries along with it both majeſty and eaſe; it is familiar, but genteel; and the beauty of the Greek language, which is above every other, ſuperadds to its entertainment.

Virgil, however, has made the moſt of his language; and, conſidering that he came after Homer, has done wonders. His harmony and diction are uniformly great, pompous, and noble. He is more chaſte and correct than moſt other poets; and he has a ſoftneſs in his manner that forms an agreeable contraſt to a certain auſterity that often predominates in Homer. Yet this auſterity has inexpreſſible charms to certain readers; and almoſt to every reader on certain occaſions. And I confeſs that nothing has ſtruck me more with admiration of the judgment and gravity of Homer's genius, than this trait in his character; eſpecially when contraſted with Virgil. Milton has alſo a ſhare of it, perhaps from natural temper, or partly imitated from Homer.

On the other hand, Virgil has a tenderneſs, as well as delicacy, that endears him ſtrongly to the feeling heart. I inſtance many paſſages in the divine Eneid; the praiſes of a country-life, and the deſcription of love in the Georgics, with the Pollio and Gallus in his Bucolics; all which, beſides the inimitable beauty of ſtyle, contain the moſt tender touches of pathos, and can be read times paſt reckoning without wearineſs.

I conclude theſe remarks by obſerving, that as the four above mentioned geniuſes have excelled all others in invention, ſentiment, and language, ſo are they particularly remarkable for the propriety of their verſification, and for adopting the order and ſound of their words to the ſenſe of what they write. Homer and Shakeſpeare ſeem to poſſeſs this from nature; Virgil and Milton more from ſtudy, or an ear formed upon the harmony of Homer.

Indeed I preſume this beauty is ſo great, ſo eſſential to poetry, that were we to derange even the verſification of Homer, we might indeed ſtill find the ſcattered limbs of the poet; but they would have no more that effect upon us, which their beauteous arrangement and harmony are apt to produce. Perhaps they would loſe their effect altogether, and might be contemplated only as the reveries of a romance, which, however it entertains by its imagination, or inſtructs by its moral, can never tranſport or elevate, like the varied dignity of verſe, the divine melodies of poetry.

Nor need theſe effects of verſification ſurprize us, when we conſider the wonderful effects that muſic has produced upon the human mind, in all ages of the world. Does not a ſong, or piece of muſic, counterfeit, by its ſound, the paſſion it deſcribes or would excite, whether lively, ſolemn, tender, or ſublime; and does not the effect it produces ariſe more or leſs from the muſical imitation of ſuch paſſions? Are we then to wonder that poetry, which imitates by its ſound, not only human paſſions, but human actions and movements, and even the ſtate and operations of inanimate nature, ſhould produce ſuch effects by ſuch imitations?

ESSAY II.

Illuſtrations on Homer, concluding with remarks on Heſiod.

HOMER, of all poets, Shakeſpeare excepted, may be conſidered as the peculiar poet of nature. His very epithets are beautiful and expreſſive, and peculiarly appropriated to the character or objects they deſcribe. And they are ſo pictureſque, that they often exhibit more in a ſingle word than a much larger deſcription.

Ειναοσιφυλλον, for inſtance, applied to a mountain covered with woods, is more emphatical than many lines of deſcription. His alluſions to the ſea are frequent; and the epithets

lively and of various import; to the earth, the ſame. The ferociouſneſs of warriors is often compared to that of wild beaſts; ſuch as, lions, bears, wolves, eagles; which gives peculiar force and variety to his deſcriptions.

Vaſt, violent, or loud motions are beſt deſcribed by Homer; ſmooth, gentle. or graceful ones by Virgil: conſequently while the latter poet excels in grace and beauty, the other tranſcends in deſcriptions of terror and ſublimity.

Upon the whole Homer is at once majeſtic and ſimple; various, dramatic, and full of incident; highly deſcriptive and picturesque, yet natural; maſter of the moſt commanding ſtrokes of the pathetic, and even dwelling on them when occaſion requires; always moral and engaging, though ſeemingly without deſign.

The poem of the Iliad, though, at firſt view, it might ſeem a rhapſody of battles, high paſſions, and characters, is yet a moſt regular piece; and there is no poem in the world conſtructed with greater art and judgment. Its time of action is regularly conducted; every part of it is ſeen connected with another, in regular ſucceſſion; it begins with the anger of Achilles, and ends with the death of Hector, when that anger ceaſed. All the parts riſe out of each other in the moſt ſurprizing and natural gradation; and every action has a manifeſt tendency either to elucidate or enforce the ſubject of the poem, exalt the principal character, or promote the deſign of the whole.

Homer, in reſpect of art and regularity of deſign, ſhows not only the moſt conſummate judgment, but the moſt aſtoniſhing invention. The conſtruction of his deſign through all its infinite variety of parts, their mutual and natural concatenation, with the admirable and grand reſult of the whole, ſhow a mind to the laſt degree comprehenſive, inventive, and judicious; I had almoſt ſaid, divine. A perſpicuity, quick as lightening, ſeems to have overlooked and extended the plan, connected the various links, and breathed life and intelligence into the whole.

It is not to be doubted but that, as Virgil's main deſign in the Eneid was to raiſe the fame of the Romans, and compliment Auguſtus, whom he ſhadows forth under the character of Eneas, and extols in the higheſt ſtrain of panegyric in the beginning of his firſt and third Georgic; ſo Homer was led, like a true patriot, to compoſe the Iliad, in order to celebrate the warlike ſpirit of his countrymen, as particularly diſtinguiſhed from the Aſiatics, with whom they were continually at war.

As the Trojan war was the moſt ancient ſtory he could pitch upon, he has accordingly thrown into it all that intereſt which variety of character, national diſtinction, and hiſtorical truth, joined to the fineſt poetical embelliſhments, could poſſibly produce.

In many reſpects Homer is the moſt moral and religious of all poets; for he refers every thing to the gods. All is done by the will of Jove, or celeſtial agency of one kind or another. And although he is often allegorical in introducing Minerva or Apollo, or ſuch like deities, (who may be conſidered as ſo many perſonified virtues), yet, beſides the poetical intereſt and dignity, the frequent introduction of ſuch perſonages gives a religious air to the poem, and teaches us not to aſcribe too much to ourſelves, but to truſt to the gods, and refer our actions to them.

The morality and religion of the Iliad are, moreover, conſpicuous in the fate of the different actors. Paris is an emblem of the fate of the whole Trojans. They are unſucceſsful, becauſe they deſerved it, by being engaged in a bad cauſe.

The anger of Achilles, indeed, gives them a little reſpite; they are often victorious from merit; for Hector and Sarpedon, as well as many others, are reſpectable characters. The Trojans in general are brave and honourable; they are alſo religious, and favourites of heaven; but for ſome old offences which ſtill ſtand charged againſt them, and the recent outrage of Paris in the rape of Helen, they are upon the whole unſucceſsful.

In a word, the morality of Homer continually and every where predominates, and in ſuch a degree, that no other author in this reſpect can be compared to him. It is ſeen in his allegory, machinery, and in the moral maxims with which he abounds; ſo that he is a philoſopher and lawgiver, as well as a poet; a ſage in the guiſe of a bard, lecturing to all mankind, and pointing out the road of their duty in whatever ſituation or character they may be placed. This is viſible in almoſt every page of the Iliad, but more particularly prevails in the Odyſſey; of which the principal character, Ulyſſes, affords one continued example, of the moſt perfect kind, what virtue, prudence, perſeverance, and fortitude are able to effect, in almoſt every poſſible ſituation and emergency. And here we may add, in favour of the Odyſſey, that Homer's genius ſeems not in the leaſt to flag in it, as ſome have thought. He is rather more intereſting and natural than in the Iliad; painting ſcenes more according to common life: he is alſo more moral, and abounds more in reflections; nor is he leſs great in deſcription when his ſubject requires it.

Homer's power in deſcription is ſeen in the following ſimilie, which we ſhall give out of many of the ſublime kind. He is deſcribing the march of the Grecian army. B. 2. v. 780. Iliad.

Οἱ δ' ἄρ' ἴσαν, ὡσεί τε πυρὶ χθὼν πᾶσα νέμοιτο·
Γαῖα δ' ὑπεστονάχιζε, Διὶ ὣς τερπικεραύνῳ
Χωομένῳ, ὅτε τ' ἀμφὶ Τυφωεῖ γαῖαν ἰμάσσῃ
Εἰν Αρίμοις, ὅθι φασὶ Τυφωέος ἔμμεναι εὐνάς·
Ως ἄρα τῶν ὑπο ποσσὶ μέγα ϛοναχίζετο γαῖα
Ερχομένων.

Now like a deluge cov'ring all around,
The ſhining armies ſweep along the ground;
Swift as a flood of fire, when ſtorms ariſe,
Floats the wide field and blazes to the ſkies.
Earth groan'd beneath them; as when angry Jove
Hurls down the forky light'ning from above,

On Arime when he the thunder throws,
And fires Typhœus with redoubled blows,
Where Typhon, preſt beneath the burning load,
Still feels the fury of the avenging God.

Beſides the beauty of Homer's ſimilies, which give ſuch life to his poems, and in which he excels all others, he abounds in a number of local circumſtances, and alluſions to the cuſtoms of the times and perſons then exiſting ſo as to preſent the moſt pictureſque and intereſting view of the objects. Of this kind is his deſcription of the ſcenery near Troy, of the palace of Priam, of the beech tree near the Scæan Gate, the fig tree near the tomb of Ilus, of Neſtor's cup, Agamemmon's ſtaff of ſuch a heroe's horſes, another's ſhield or helmet: All is nature, exhibiting the times in the moſt lively circumſtances; and in this as in other important reſpects, ſome of which we have already mentioned: Homer reſembles the lively genius of Shakeſpeare, who, likewiſe, abounds in thoſe familiar and natural alluſions, more than any other Engliſh poet. Addiſon, indeed, is remarkable for theſe alluſions in his Spectator and other works.

The phyſical diſtinction betwixt the natural tempers and warlike modes of the Greeks and Aſiatics, is well diſcriminated in the following lines, truely admirable for their poetry, fine allegory, and ſtrict philoſophical ſpirit: B. 4. 422.

Ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἐν αἰγιαλῷ πολυηχέϊ κῦμα θαλάσσης,
Ὄρνυτ' ἐπασσύτερον, Ζεφύρῳ ὑποκινήσαντος,
Πόντῳ μὲν τὰ πρῶτα κορύσσεται, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
Χέρσῳ ἐρεγνύμενον μεγάλα βρέμει, ἀμφὶ δέ τ' ἄκρας
Κυρτὸν ἐὸν κορυφοῦται ἀποπλύει δ' ἁλὸς ἀχνην·
Ὡς τότ' ἐπασσύτεραι Δαναῶν κίνυντο φάλαγγες
Νωλεμέως πόλεμόνδε· κέλευε δὲ οἷσιν ἕκαστος
Ἡγεμόνων· οἱ δ' ἄλλοι ἀκὴν ἰσαν, ὐδέ κε φαίης
Τόσσον λαὸν ἕπεσθαι ἔχοντ' ἐν στήθεσιν αὐδὴν,
Σιγῇ δειδιότες σιμάντορας· ἀμφὶ δὲ πᾶσι

Τευχεα ποικίλ' ἔλαμπε, τὰ εἵμενοι ἐστιχόωντο.
Τρῶες δ', ὡς ὅτε πολυπάμμονες ἀνδρὸς ἐν αὐλῇ
Μυρίαι ἑστήκασιν ἀμελγόμεναι γάλα λευκὸν,
Αζηχὲς μεμακυῖαι, ἀκούσασαι ὀπα ἀρνῶν.
Ὡς Τρώων ἀλαλητὸς ἀνὰ στρατὸν εὐρὺν ὀρώρει.
Οὐ γαρ πάντων ἦεν ὁμὸς θρόος, οὐδ' ἰα γῆρυς,
Ἀλλὰ γλῶσσ' ἐμέμικτο, πολύκλητοι δ' ἔσαν ἄνδρες.
Ὧρσε δὲ τὺς μεν Ἄρης, τὺς δὲ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη,
Δεῖμός τ', ἠδὲ Φόβος, καὶ Ἔρις ἄμοτον μεμαυῖα,
Ἀρεος ἀνδροφόνοιο κασιγνήτη, ἑταίρη τε,
Ἣ τ' ὀλίγη μεὺ πρῶτα κορύσσεται, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
Οὐρανῷ ἐστήριξε κάρη, καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ βαίνει.
Ἣ σφιν καὶ τότε νεῖκος ὁμοίιον ἐμβαλε μέσσῳ,
Ἐρχομένη καθ' ὁμιλον, ὀφέλλουσα στόνον ἀνδρῶν.

As when the winds, aſcending by degrees,
Firſt move the whitening ſurface of the ſeas,
The billows float in order to the ſhore,
The wave behind rolls on the wave before;
'Till, with the growing ſtorm, the deeps ariſe,
Foam o'er the rocks, and thunder to the ſkies.
So to the fight the thick battalions throng,
Shields urg'd on ſhields, and men drove men along.
Sedate and ſilent move the num'rous bands;
No ſound, no whiſper, but the chief's commands,
Thoſe only heard; with awe the reſt obey,
As if ſome God had ſnatch'd their voice away.
Not ſo the Trojans; from their hoſt aſcends
A gen'ral ſhout that all the region rends.
As when the fleecy flocks unnumber'd ſtand
In wealthy folds, and wait the milker's hand,
The hollow vales inceſſant bleating fills,
The lambs reply from all the neighb'ring hills:
Such clamours roſe from various nations round,
Mix'd was the murmur, and confus'd the ſound.

Each hoſt now joins, and each a God inſpires,
Theſe Mars incites, and thoſe Minerva fires.
Pale Flight around, and dreadful Terror reign;
And Diſcord raging bathes the purple plain:
Diſcord! dire ſiſter of the ſlaught'ring pow'r,
Small at her birth, but riſing ev'ry hour,
While ſcarce the ſkies her horrid head can bound,
She ſtalks on earth, and ſhakes the world around;
The nations bleed, where-e'er her ſteps ſhe turns,
The groan ſtill deepens, and the combat burns.

Homer, as has been ſaid, excels in gradation, or in riſing gradually, as it were, above himſelf. This is no where more conſpicuous, than in the character he draws of Hector; and of all characters in the Iliad, we deem this the moſt accompliſhed. The poet ſeems to take a delight to dwell on it, and has repreſented it in ſuch a variety of attitudes, as makes it highly intereſting to every reader. To paint him forth, as a noble and gallant warrior, he has laviſhed all the art of pencil and colours; and we are amazed at the imagination of the poet in being able to exhibit him ſo often in his warlike capacity; and yet, at every appearance, to clothe him with a new dreſs, and with ſome additional luſtre or terror. As a warrior, therefore, he appears diſtinguiſhed; and we ſee the poet's deſign in this has been to throw the more glory on Achilles, with whom he intended to contraſt him.

But what intereſts us moſt in this character, and ſets off every other quality in it, is the amiable light in which Hector is exhibited in the ſixth book, where, in his interview with Andromache, he

" reſign'd
" To tender paſſions all his mighty mind." *Pope.*

I cannot conceive it in the power of a poet to repreſent a more tender and affecting ſcene. With all its concomitant circumſtances, it is noble and intereſting in the higheſt degree,

and the ſoul that is not touched with it, almoſt to tears, both of admiration and ſympathy, gives but an indifferent proof of its ſenſibility.

But there are many ſuch tender paſſages in Homer, that, with all his ſternneſs and auſterity on other occaſions, ſhow ſufficiently his ſenſibility, and his powers in the pathetic, equal to any poet whatever. Such is the fall of Patroclus, and the death of Hector, with the conſequent mournings of their friends, and the affecting appearance of king Priam, eſpecially in his interview with Achilles, ſoliciting the body of Hector. And there are many paſſages in the Odyſſey of a ſimilar nature; among others, the ſoliloquies and lamentations of Penelope, grieving (amidſt the band of inſolent and rapacious ſuitors) for the loſs of her ſon and the abſence of her huſband, in the 24th Book, the grand and ſublime lamentation of Thetis with all her nymphs over the death of Achilles; and above all in the pathetic ſtyle, that moſt affecting interview and diſcovery betwixt Ulyſſes and his father Laertes, about the middle of the ſame Book.

Upon the whole, juſtly may Homer be conſidered as the firſt and beſt of the epic poets; and the great fountain head from whoſe fulneſs all of them have drawn, and enriched their compoſitions. So vaſt and comprehenſive, indeed, was his genius, that of every ſpecies of poetic compoſition, he left a pattern, a pattern that might be imitated, but was never ſurpaſſed.

Heſiod was perhaps more ancient, by ſome years, than Homer: but it appears not certain, that the latter borrowed any of his beauties from the former; although the reſemblance of their ſtyle and phraſeology renders this ſuppoſition in ſome degree probable. For beauty, ſimplicity, and purity of diction, Heſiod has few equals; and conſidering that he is perhaps the moſt ancient of all poets extant, he bears value on that account. His works of antiquity indeed are viſible in the ſtructure of his verſe, and the choice of his particles, and in his poſſeſſing many ancient words, not found

in Homer. For gravity of remark and numberleſs moral and prudential maxims he is particularly remarkable; he, above all, praiſes economy, and recommends that leſſon on every occaſion throughout his Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι. In his Theogonia he riſes in his ſtyle, and is often eminently deſcriptive, but falls ſhort of the boundleſs variety and ſublimity of Homer; and though on ſome occaſions there is a fullneſs and dignity in him, that warms and elevates, he is upon the whole dry and didactic; neither has he given us any one inſtance of the pathetic; but perhaps he may be excuſed for this, as it did not fall in the way of his ſubjects.

ESSAY III.

Illuſtrations on Virgil, concluding with Remarks on Lucretius.

AS we have already ſaid ſo much on this prince of Roman poets, we ſhall only give a few inſtances of his peculiar manner. The following deſcription of a thunder ſtorm, is a ſpecimen of his talent in ſublime painting; and which it is impoſſible to read without emotions of the moſt elevated kind.

Ruit arduus æther
Et pluviâ ingenti ſata læta, boumque labores
Diluit; impleutar foſſæ et cava flumina creſcunt
Cum ſonitu; fervetque fretis ſpirantibus æquor.
Ipſe pater, media nimborum in nocte, coruſca
Fulmina molitur dextra, quo maxima motu
Terra tremit: fugêre feræ, et mortalia corda
Per gentes humilis ſtravit pavor; ille flagranti
Aut Athon, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit; ingemiſcant auſtri, et denſiſſimus imber;
Nunc nemora ingenti vento, nunc littora plangunt.

What is chiefly to be admired in this paſſage, is the awful appearance Jupiter makes in the ſtorm. There is a vaſt force and grandeur in the words *media nimborum in nocte*, but when he comes to launch his thunder, we think we ſee him heaving the unweildy bolt. *Fulmina molitur dextrâ.* The very line labours with it. The word *molitur* is peculiarly expreſſive. *Fugere feræ* expreſſes the brutes flying with ſuch precipitation, as is undeſcribable in our language.

I would compare with this the deſcriptive part of the 18th Pſalm as tranſlated by Buchanan, who has ſupported it equally throughout, and with much of the ſublime ſpirit of Virgil.

Ille ſuper ſolio reſidens flammantis olympi
Audiit orantem.—
Protinus e vultu domini conterrita tellus
Intremuit, monteſque cavâ compage ſolutâ,
Nutarunt, penituſque imis fremuere cavernis.
Fumeus afflatu de naribus æſtus anhelo
Undabat, rapidæ contorto vortice flammæ
Ore fluunt, vivâque animant attacta favillâ.
Utque ſuum dominum terræ demittat in orbem,
Leniter inclinat juſſum faſtigia cœlum.
Succedunt pedibus fuſcæ caliginis umbræ.
Ille vehens curru volucri, cui flammeus ales
Lora tenens levibus ventorum adremigat alis,
Se circum furvo nebularum involvit amictu,
Prætenditqe cavis piceas in nubibus undas.
Acribus ex oculis vibratæ ſpicula flammæ
Diſcutiunt triſtes claro fulgore tenebras.
Inde ruit crepitans lapidoſæ grandinis imber,
Diſcurſantque vagæ ſinuoſa volumina flammæ.
At vero ut ſancto ſermone ſilentia rupit,
Protinus horrifico tonitru cœlum omne remugit,
Grandinis et crebrâ tellus crepitante procellâ
Pulſa ſonat, ruptiſque micant e nubibus ignes;
Flammiferæque volant magnum per inane ſagittæ,
Fulguraque ingeminant; laticum concuſſa lacunas

Pandit hians tellus, et fontibus ora relaxat;
Succutiturque pavens, et fundamenta revelat,
Et reſerat chaos.

The deſcription of the Murrain on the Alps is highly finiſhed; ſo is the ſtory of Orpheus and Eurydice. Theſe two are indeed moſt exquiſite pieces; and in Virgil's beſt manner.

The following lines in the Alpine contagion are remarkably pathetic:

Ecce autem duro fumans ſub vomere taurus
Concidit, et miſtum ſpumis vomit ore cruorem,
Extremoſque ciet gemitus. It triſtis arator,
Mœrentem abjungens fraternâ morte juvencum,
Atque opere in medio defixa relinquit aratra.
Non umbræ altorum nemorum, non mollia poſſunt
Prata movere animum, non qui per ſaxa volutus
Purior electro campum petit amnis:—
Quid labor aut benefacta juvant? quid vomere terras
Invertiſſe graves? Atqui non Maſſica Bacchi
Munera, non illis epulæ nocuere repoſtæ.
Frondibus et victu paſcuntur ſimplicis herbæ:
Pocula ſunt fontes liquidi, atque exercita curſu
Flumina; nec ſomnos abrumpit cura ſalubres.

Yet Virgil, in the above deſcription, is not altogether original. His pattern is Lucretius, on the plague at Athens; who embelliſhes, with poetic colours and excellent language, the dry, the ſtriking account given by Thucydides.

The following paſſage in Lucretius may vie even with Virgil for harmony and pathos. It is a heifer mourning for the loſs of her young.

Nam ſæpe ante Deûm vitulus delubra decora,
Turicremas propter mactatus concidit aras,
Sanguinis expirans calidum de pectore flumen.
At mater virideis ſaltus orbata peragrans,

Linquit humi pedibus veſtigia preſſa biſulcis,
Omnia conviſens oculis loca, ſi queat uſquam
Conſpicere amiſſum fœtum; et crebra reviſit
Ad ſtabulum, deſiderio perfixa juvenci:
Nec teneræ ſalices, atque herbæ rore vigentes,
Fluminaque ulla queunt ſummis labentia ripis
Oblectare animum ſubitamque avertere curam.

Beſides the admirable harmony, there is a peculiar force and propriety in the choice of every word in this deſcription, which one eaſily ſees would be almoſt impoſſible to render into any other language with ſufficient juſtice. So excellent is Lucretius, though ſo early a poet, in the elegant choice of his words.

His artful uſe of alliteration, is alſo admirable, as in the following inſtance, out of many; ſpeaking of Epicurus:

Ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra
Proceſſit longe flammantia mœnia mundi.

Likewiſe in theſe remarkable lines, deſcribing the beating of drums, at the feſtivals of Cybele:

Tympana tenta tonant, and cymbala circum
Concava, rauciſonoque minantur cornua cantu.

In all theſe the ſound is an echo to the ſenſe.

As the immortal Newton was born the ſame year that Galileo died, and ſucceeded him in the aſtronomical walk, with ſtill higher powers, and higher diſcoveries;—ſo Virgil is ſaid to have been born the very day Lucretius died; and ſeems to have enjoyed, as it were by inheritance, the ſame poetic ſpirit; his lines breathe the ſame kind of pathos, run with the ſame majeſtic harmony; a certain dignity and luminous colour of diction diſtinguiſh both. And from this reſemblance we infer that Virgil has borrowed not only the expreſſion, but the very ſoul and ſpirit of his predeceſſor.

The main difference between them is their ſubject, which in Lucretius was an unlucky one: Yet the gloomy chaos of

epicuriſm riſes under his hand to a momentary ſplendor; at leaſt the moral part of it becomes engaging, if the ſweeteſt numbers, the moſt touching pathos, and the fineſt moral reflexions can give intereſt to any ſubject.

In Lucretius there is, moreover, ſomething of the antique, that makes him ſtill more agreeable; this, joined to ſtrength and ſimplicity, to manly diſcords mixed with the ſmootheſt harmony, prevents his tiring the ear; and I know no poet in his language, that in the above reſpects, (always excepting his erroneous philoſophy), will bear more readings with pleaſure.

Nor let this be conſidered as a degradation of Virgil. I have before obſerved a ſimilar reſemblance between Homer and Heſiod; the one having copied the manner, ('tis probable) and transfuſed not only the expreſſion, but the ſpirit of the other. The main difference is their ſubject. Yet no impeachment lies againſt good authors on this account. In fact, all great geniuſes, in one reſpect or other, imitate one another, yet with ſome difference; and to mark this difference is one deſign of the preſent criticiſm.

Virgil, therefore, is infinitely ſuperior to Lucretius in his ſubjects. His Georgic, as a didactic poem, is more finiſhed, uſeful and poetical. Indeed his ſtyle and harmony on all occaſions are better ſupported; and his Eneid, as a whole, fills the mind with more various, ſublime, and affecting ideas. There is a gloom ariſing from his philoſophy, that hangs upon the mind in reading Lucretius, that chagrins and diſappoints us: and which ſhows, that atheiſm can never be a favourite ſyſtem with the bulk of mankind, however well it may be dreſſed out by the wit and art of ingenious men. There is ſomething in all feeling breaſts that revolts againſt it.

Among the beſt paſſages in Lucretius, is the addreſs to Venus in the firſt Book, which is highly poetical and deſcriptive throughout; but the attitude of Mars as deſcribed reclining from his warlike toils, and leaning enamoured on

Venus, is one of the richeſt and fineſt pieces of poetical painting to be found in any poet.

Next ſucceed, in point of merit, the beginnings of the ſecond and third Book; but eſpecially the third Book, towards the end, for more than 200 lines. is written with great pathos, and contains excellent cautions againſt the fear of death, and many touching remarks on the vanity of human purſuits. Lucretius lectures here, like a true philoſopher; and his morality is worthy of a Socrates.

The fourth Book is, likewiſe, moſt excellent for about an equal number of lines on the ſubject of Love, on which it deſcants with great pathos; but the paſſion upon the whole is condemned as dangerous in its conſequences to true happineſs, and many uſeful cautions are given by the poet againſt it, animated with a vein of the beſt poetry.

The fifth Book, in the beginning, is moral and touching for two or three pages only; it then deſcribes the formation of the world from the concourſe of atoms; and concludes with the riſe of arts and ſciences, and the manners of the firſt ages; which are well worth peruſing.

The ſixth Book explains the phænomena of nature with much of ſtrong language and good poetry, but little of true philoſophy. His theories concerning winds, rain, thunder, &c. are almoſt all erroneous. Yet he has given us all that the ancients knew on thoſe ſubjects, together with ſeveral ingenious conjectures of his own: Witneſs his obſervations on the cauſes of the annual innundations of the Nile.

The beſt part of this Book is the concluſion, giving a moſt animated and ſtriking deſcription of the famous plague that raged at Athens in the time of Pericles.

It is ſaid that Lucretius became inſane by a love-potion adminiſtered to him by his wife; and that he wrote, *during his lucid intervals*, *Poema de Rerum Natura*; which Cicero afterwards corrected and publiſhed.

ESSAY IV.

Illuſtrations on the Satires and Epiſtles of Horace.

HORACE may be conſidered in two points of view; firſt, as the prince of Roman lyric poetry, ſublime, moral, and deſcriptive; ſecondly, as a ſatyric, humourous, or familiar writer, in which character he is equally inſtructive and pleaſing; and if he elevates leſs, perhaps he engages more.

I have already mentioned his moralities as a ſtriking part in his portrait. 'Tis this that renders him ſo peculiarly intereſting in his Odes, not only in the ſublime, but even the lighter ones; in which laſt he well imitates the ſprightly eaſe of Anacreon; but is more moral, more touching, more intereſting.

'Tis his deſcription of life and manners, his frequent moralities, ſeaſoned with gaiety, good-nature, and a warm, ſocial, and candid heart, that render him more engaging, at leaſt to many, than perhaps any other ancient writer.

This part of his character appears to peculiar advantage in his Satires and Epiſtles, which may be conſidered as not only a picture of that age, but alſo of the life and manners of the author. An excellent wit ſhines through the whole, a winning kind of ſatire that gains upon the heart, at the ſame time that it corrects the judgment; in a word, with ſome exceptions, he is the moſt perfect of writers, even in ſatire. At leaſt he has the merit of paving the way to all ſucceeding authors in this department; and is far ſuperior to Pope, and even Boileau, the two moſt diſtinguiſhed of modern ſatiriſts.

Perſius is wonderfully ſmart and moral, but figurative and conciſe even to obſcurity; Juvenal is ſublimely eloquent, and not inferior to Perſius in morality, both being ſcholars of the Stoic ſchool; but he is ſometimes too ſevere

and not ſeldom indelicate: His manner, compared to Horace, is auſtere and gloomy, but he will always pleaſe thoſe ſerious minds that delight moſt in a dark view of things, and cannot think on the vices of the times without melancholy and a ſerious kind of indignation. Dr. Young was a ſatiriſt of this caſt.

One writer of our own days, I beg leave to touch upon, although not in a compariſon with thoſe mentioned above, eſpecially as he was a party-writer; and was not moved to exert his talents from a regard to virtue, or an abhorence of vice, ſo much as to pleaſe a favourite junto, and to humour his own particular paſſions and caprice.

I mean Churchill, the author of the Roſciad and Apology to the Critical Reviewers; for which pieces he has great merit, as well as for ſome others which are well known. It is only to be regretted that, with good ſatiric powers, and great ſtrength and eloquence of diction, he fails for want of morality and impartiality, which ought to be the ſeaſoner, and indeed the chief ground of almoſt every kind of writing, but eſpecially ſatiric poetry.

On the preſent occaſion I mean only to make a few general remarks on the Satires and Epiſtles of Horace, marking the moſt ſtriking paſſages as I go along.

The firſt Satire is unexceptionable, and deſcribes well the inconſtancy of the purſuits of men; the concluſion is fine againſt avarice. The ſecond abounds too much in the deſcription of catamites, adulterers, and other infamous perſons; and there are many indelicate expreſſions, ill-ſuited to modeſt ears, particularly thoſe of youth.

The journey to Brunduſium, in the fifth Satire, is witty, conciſe, and entertaining, but not very poetical; it is in the light manner of a familiar tale, much like the ninth. The ſcolding-ſcene, betwixt the Buffoon and Cicerrus, might have been ſpared, as it is entirely in the Billingſgate ſtyle, and affords no proper entertainment. There is alſo another paſſage indelicate to the laſt degree, and which nothing

but the groſs and unpoliſhed ſtate of ancient manners can excuſe.

How often have I regretted ſuch impurities, not only in Horace, but in Catullus, Martial, Petronius, and Juvenal, though otherwiſe moſt elegant and inſtructive writers! Even the jeſts of the philoſophic Cicero are extremely rough; the ſatire of the elegant Lucian is too often cruel and indelicate; and Ariſtophenes, though poſſeſſed, in other reſpects, of the pureſt Attic wit, is by far too rude and obſcene in his jeſts! I conſider theſe blemiſhes as the ore of ancient wit, from which it ought to be purified before it is put into the hands of youth.

In the ſixth Satire Horace ſhows that true nobility conſiſts not in ſounding titles, or the ſplendor of anceſtry, but in virtue and purity of morals. He here deſcribes, with abundance of ſpirit, the manner of his introduction to the acquaintance of Mæcenas; along with the circumſtances of his education, where he mentions his father with particular honour.

"Ipſe mihi cuſtos incorrupliſſimus omnes
Circum doctores aderat: Quid multa? pudicum
(Qui primus virtutis honos) ſervavit ab omni
Non ſolum facto, verum opprobrio quoque turpi."

He afterwards deſcants upon the virtue and ſimplicity of his own life; mentions candidly ſome of his foibles; deſcribes his table, equipage, amuſements: Here every particular is intereſting; we ſee him pure and honeſt; warm and candid; ſimple, even in his pleaſures; his morality, like his temper, eaſy, chearful, and ſerene.

"——Hæc eſt
Vita ſolutorum miſera ambitione gravique."

This retired and diſengaged kind of life, he elſewhere well expreſſes by the "fallentis ſemita vitæ;" which Gray, no doubt, had in his eye in theſe lines:

" Along the cool ſequeſter'd vale of life,
They kept the noiſeleſs tenor of their way."

Satire eighth humorouſly deſcribes the deteſtable incantations of Canidia and Sagana; the language here is lively and poetical, the deſign commendable, and the concluſion not a little ludicrous. 'Tis Priapus that ſpeaks and expoſes the horrid charms of thoſe infernal hags.

Book 2d, Satire firſt, contains an amuſing dialogue between Horace and Trebatius, on the queſtion of his continuing to write ſatire. The latter humorouſly diſſuades him; but the author as humorouſly adduces cogent reaſons why he ſhould go on. He here ſpecifies, in lively terms, the manner of Lucilius, and his way of life with Scipio and Lælius. This Satire is imitated by Pope with great ſpirit, and with much of the eaſy, natural manner of the original.

Satire ſecond is an excellent one indeed, upon the virtues of temperance and frugality. The fifth is a burleſque upon fortune-hunters and paraſites; the ſixth deſcribes his own wiſhes, and prefers the pleaſures of the country to the cares and tumults of the city; wherein are the following moſt delectable lines:

" O rus quando ego te aſpiciam, quandoque licebit
Nunc veterum libris, nunc ſomno et inertibus horis,
Ducere ſolicitæ jucunda oblivia vitæ!
O quando faba, Pythagoræ cognata, ſimulque
Uncta ſatis pingui ponentur oluſcula lardo!
O noctes cœnæque divûm, quibus ipſe, meique
Ante Larem proprium veſcor, vernaſque procaces
Paſco libatis dapibus!"

The tale of the country and city mouſe is thereafter introduced, and inimitably told. The moral is ſelf-evident.

The 7th Satire is humorous in the higheſt degree; the concluſion is particularly ſo:

" ——Adde quod idem
Non horam tecum eſſe potes, non otia recte
Ponere; teque ipſum vitas fugitivus ut erro;
Jam vino quærens, jam ſomno fallere curam:
Fruſtra: nam comes atra premit, ſequiturque fugacem.
Unde mihi lapidem? Quorſum eſt opus? unde ſagittas?
Aut inſanit homo, aut verſus facit. Ocius hinc te
Ni rapis, accedes opera agro nona Sabino."

The Epiſtles are eſteemed ſtill more finiſhed and correct than the Satires; perhaps becauſe they came laſt, and were written at a pretty advanced period of life.

They are indeed maſter-pieces of Attic elegance, manners, and philoſophy, and contain the moſt agreeable picture of the author's heart and life; the moſt excellent rules of conduct, and the moſt perfect examples for forming the breaſt to virtue and happineſs.

The firſt Epiſtle of Horace, ſays Scaliger, is ſweeter than any honey; he here explains his own philoſophy, and inveighs, with juſt ſatire, againſt the inconſtancy of men and their falſe deſires after wealth and honours. His motto is:

" Hic murus aheneus eſto,
Nil conſcire ſibi, nullâ palleſcre culpâ."

The ſecond Epiſtle is not inferior to the other; it is rather more philoſophical.

" Sapere aude,
Incipe; vivendi recte qui prorogat horam
Ruſticus expectat dum defluat amnis; at ille
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum."

The three following Epiſtles, though ſhort, are exquiſite; and breathe the very ſpirit of candour, friendſhip, and honeſty. The ſixth to Numicius is free, philoſophical, and eaſy. The concluding lines are in the manner of Anacreon and Mimnermus, to whoſe philoſophy Horace was ſometimes not a little

inclined in ſentiment; though perhaps in practice he was far more temperate than either.

The ſeventh Epiſtle is particularly ſweet and pleaſant; it is addreſſed to Mæcenas, whoſe liberality to him he candidly praiſes, but at the ſame time inſiſts upon his independence, like a true philoſopher. His defence, upon Mæcenas' complaining for his non-attendance on his levee, is excellent in theſe words:

" Quod ſi me noles uſquam diſcedere, reddes
Forte latus, nigros auguſta fronte capillos:
Reddes dulce loqui; reddes ridere decorum, et
Inter vina fugam Cynaræ mœrere protervæ.
Forte per auguſtam tenuis nitedula rimam
Repſerat in cumeram frumenti, paſtaque rurſus
Ire foras pleno tendebat corpore fruſtra:
Cui muſtela procul; ſi vis, ait, effugere iſtinc,
Macra cavum repetes arctum, quem macra ſubiſti.
Hac ego ſi compeller imagine, cuncta reſigno."

The ſtory of Philip and Mænas the crier is likewiſe extremely appoſite to the ſubject of the Epiſtle, and is told with infinite humour. However, it is not to be denied but that Pope has entered much into the Horatian manner.

In Epiſtle ninth he recommends Septimius to Claudius Nero; this Epiſtle is noted by Addiſon as a maſter-piece in the recommendatory way, and is compared to another in Pliny of the ſame kind. In the following one to Ariſtius Fuſcus he deſcants farther on retirement, and the pleaſures of a country life; the lines, as uſual, run ſmooth and eaſy, and the thoughts are exceedingly natural and juſt.

In this, as in all his other Epiſtles and Satires, his alluſions are peculiarly happy and natural; a quality which Addiſon has likewiſe remarked in Epictetus, and in which he reſembles the familiar but lively didactic manner of Horace. *It is needleſs to exemplify*, as it is eaſily obſerved by an attentive reader. The inſtances are numberleſs in which it oc-

curs, and it forms an agreeable and ſtriking trait in the wit of our author, and ſets it off with a nice reliſh. And one can eaſily imagine that the ſame happy turn for familiar and natural alluſion, prevailed in his converſation, and rendered it pointed, lively, and diverting in a very high degree.

Epiſtle 18th deſcribes and recommends the duties of friendſhip, with many philoſophical remarks on the proper means to obtain eaſe and tranquillity of mind. His farewel addreſs to his book, in the laſt Epiſtle, is peculiarly ſprightly and humorous.

The two Epiſtles of the ſecond Book are moſt admirable; and indeed above all praiſe. Both are tranſlated by Pope in his happieſt manner; and it is not too much to ſay, that they equal, if not ſurpaſs any other tranſlation whatever.

The one to Auguſtus is the longeſt and moſt finiſhed. It diſcourſes of poetry and the wrong taſte of the times; The ſentiments here are extremely juſt; and are argued with much good ſenſe, ſpirit, and acuteneſs. The author goes over a wide field, rallies in his way the common faults both of writers and readers, and particularly inveighs againſt the rage for ſcribbling which then ſo much prevailed.

The lines from "Romæ diu dulce fuit" (line 103, to 138) contain a great deal of good-humoured ſatire. What follows is in the ſame maſterly ſtyle, and deſcribes the riſe and progreſs of poetry (eſpecially dramatic) among the Romans; The reigning abuſes of the ſtage are next canvaſſed; much able criticiſm is thrown out, and the language all along is peculiarly ſtrong, pointed, and ſevere; much in the manner of Juvenal.

In the epiſtle to Florus, upon the merit and demerit of authors, are ſome excellent lines upon the diſtractions of the city, as unfavourable to the muſe.

"Præter cætera, me Romæne poemata cenſes
Scribere poſſe, inter tot curas, totque labores?
Hic ſponſum vocat, hic auditum ſcripta, relictis
Omnibus officiis; cubat hic in colle Quirini:

Hic extremo in Aventino: viſendus uterque:
Intervalla vides humanè commoda. Verum
Puræ ſunt platææ, nihil ut meditantibus obſtet;
Feſtinat calidus mulis geruliſque redemptor;
Torquet nunc lapidem, nunc ingens machina tignum;
Triſtia robuſtis luctantur funera plauſtris;
Hac rabioſa fugit canis; hac latulenta ruit ſus.
I nunc, et verſus tecum meditare canoros.
Scriptorum chorus omnis amat nemus, et fugit urbes,
Rite cliens Bacchi ſomno gaudentis et umbra."

The concluſion of this excellent Epiſtle breathes a moſt agreeable ſpirit of virtue, contentment, and happy tranquillity.

As for the epiſtle to the Piſos, on the Art of Poetry, I agree in opinion with the ingenious Dr. Hurd, that it is not ſo much a rhapſody of detached ſentences upon poetry in general, as a connected and regular piece upon the Roman drama in particular. This plan, though not obvious at firſt view, unfolds itſelf upon attentive peruſal. We hence ſee that Horace was not only a moſt ingenious poet, but a critic of the firſt rank, who diſcerned things acutely, and with a wide, juſt, and moſt extenſive view.

Upon the whole, the wit of Horace, both in his Epiſtles and Satires, is of the genuine ſort, Attic and elegant: the diction natural, graceful, and ſuitable to the ſubject; the verſification ſmooth, round, and ſweet; the ſenſe ſtrong; the morality, with a few exceptions, pure; and the philoſophy of the moſt ſmiling, ſocial, and generous kind.

ESSAY V.

Herodotus and Livy compared.

HERODOTUS, being the moſt ancient of all hiſtorians, if we except the ſacred, and the moſt ancient of all profane

writers, if we except Heſiod and Homer, is intitled to merit on the ſcore of his antiquity.

It muſt be allowed, by every candid judge, that to have been the firſt who figured in any art or ſcience, is matter of praiſe and merit; and as Homer has, by the ſuffrage of ages been juſtly eſteemed the father of poetry, ſo Herodotus, with equal juſtice is reckoned the father of hiſtory; as he is not only the moſt ancient in that department, but one of the moſt eminent in point of diction, eloquence, and narration!

If we reckon according to probability and the beſt accounts, Heſiod and Homer lived 930 years, and Herodotus 500 years before Chriſt; ſo there is only the difference of 430 years betwixt them.

It is indeed ſurpriſing, that, in all this long period, among ſo ingnious a people, no hiſtorian ſtarted up of eminence ſufficient to tranſmit his works to poſterity, or to leave us ſome intereſting account of thoſe dark and remote ages. Herodotus is the firſt; and, excepting the ſacred writers, is the only ancient author that has given us any tolerable, or any ſatisfactory account of thoſe times. Egyptians, Babylonians, Perſians, Lydians, Grecians, &c. all enter into his narration, which ſurveys a wide field of ancient ſtory, and deſcribes every thing in the moſt intereſting manner.

There is a dignity and ſweet fluency of ſtyle, joined to a philoſphy and morality of ſentiment peculiar to him; and as his ſtyle and ſpirit never flag, but are calculated both to profit and pleaſe, hence, perhaps he is the moſt moral and entertaining of hiſtorians; for, like a poet, he draws his characters and relates his ſtories, always with a view to inſtruct, or convey ſome moral to the reader.

It would be wrong to compare him to Xenophon, ſince both his manner and dialect are different; and yet they are both remarkably ſweet and ſimple in their ſtyle. The Cyropædeia alone bears a reſemblance to Herodotus, in mixing philoſophy and fable together. In moſt of his other

pieces Xenophon adheres more to ſtrict veracity, and the rules of true and ſerious hiſtory.

Herodotus very much reſembles Homer. He adopts his favourite dialect, which, from its liquid and muſical tones, has uncommon charms. He ſcatters his words and ſentences with a copious fluency, and begins and ends his ſpeeches like Homer; beſides ſeveral ſmaller ſimilarities of expreſſion, which an attentive ſcholar will obſerve.

Yet his ſtyle is entirely his own; being truly hiſtorical, and poſſeſſed of a natural eaſe and grace peculiar to itſelf.

It is obſervable, that Herodotus is the firſt hiſtorian who makes uſe of ſet ſpeeches or orations, ſuited to particular occaſions in his hiſtory; and in this he has been followed by Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Salluſt, Tacitus, and moſt other ancient hiſtorians. I know not but Herodotus is more excuſeable and natural than any of them in this article. Indeed they are excellent, all of them in reſpect of eloquence; but Herodotus living nearer the dark and fabulous ages, was, like Homer, more at liberty to invent ſuch embelliſhments, and give a greater play to his imagination. Hence ſuch inventions come in with more propriety, and have more an air of probability in him than in the poliſhed lines of latter writers.

We do not, however, blame Livy in this point, nor even Salluſt or Tacitus. They ſhew amazing genius in this part of their works; animating them with a new life and ſpirit which we look for in vain in the tame and uniform dry details of ſome modern hiſtorians.

It is true that this ſuperiority of eloquence in the Greek and Roman hiſtorians and orators, (when compared to the moderns,) very much aroſe from the advantages of their education. The Greeks eſpecially, and the Romans in a leſs degree, were trained up to oratory from their earlieſt years. Having uncommon induſtry and application, the free ſpirit of their government inſpired them with a kind of enthuſiaſm to become maſters in their profeſſion, as the very exiſtence of the government ſeemed to depend on the

exertions of their oratory. Hence they weighed every word and ſentence with the utmoſt exactneſs; furniſhed themſelves with arguments on all ſides; were pathetic and vehement in action; and ſweated and toiled with far more aſſiduity to accompliſh themſelves in every reſpect, than any the moſt perfect of our modern orators. And beſides their ſuperior eloquence, they were diſtinguiſhed for their ſound ſenſe, ſound reaſoning, and juſtneſs of thinking on all occaſions.

Of all hiſtorians, Livy comes neareſt the manner of Herodotus. In writing of the firſt ages of the Roman hiſtory, he more particularly reſembles him, in giving way to ſuperſtition, and indulging in the marvellous, which is peculiarly ſuited to that period, and the grandeur of his own genius.

I can believe Livy (like Homer, Herodotus, and Xenophon), to have been of a religious temper; ſomewhat credulous, and inclined to ſuperſtition: Hence the faith they all give to prodigies, viſions, dreams, and other miraculous appearances, as ſent from the gods; but is not this, if, indeed, it is a fault, a far more excuſeable and amiable one, than the ſceptic incredulity of Tacitus, which inclined him to diſbelieve a Divine Providence on account of more than ordinary public calamities which prevailed at a particular period?

Livy, as I have hinted above, reſembles Herodotus alſo in embelliſhing hiſtory with the ornaments of imagination; viz. in enlivening his characters with oppoſite ſpeeches and dialogues in the manner of Homer, in throwing an air of intereſt on ancient fable, in lively deſcriptions of great events; and in rendering even the moſt trifling affairs intereſting and important, by the ſtriking purity, pomp, and dignity of his ſtyle.

In this pomp and dignity, which, at the ſame time, are accompanied with wonderful eaſe and grace, I imagine him without a rival in the hiſtorical ſtyle, and that Herodotus himſelf muſt yield the palm to him; ſince Livy is very generally ſuperior both to him and all other hiſtorians, in the

uniform force and dignity of his narration, and the high and affecting intereſt which he gives to the whole tenor of his hiſtory.

With what ſpirit does he deſcribe the famous combat of the Horatii and the Curiatii; the Roman wars with the Æqui and Volſci, and other Tuſcan nations; the ſeditions at Rome on account of the Agrarian law; the revolution by Brutus in the ſtory of Lucretia, as alſo that by Virginius in the intended violation of his daughter by Appius, the Decemvir; the taking of Rome by the Galli Senones, and the circumvention of the Roman army by the Samnites, and their conſequent embarraſſment at the Caudine forks.

Theſe, I ſay, are a few inſtances, out of many, in his firſt ten Books, that ſhow his uncommon talents in picturesque deſcription; and the livelineſs of his imagination in repreſenting things of ſo old a date, in ſuch vivid colours, that we could not be more ſtruck in viewing the objects themſelves.

In the more ſplendid parts of the hiſtory he is ſtill more intereſting and magnificent in his deſcriptions. Witneſs the whole of the ſecond Punic war, a portion of hiſtory ſplendid indeed in itſelf, but rendered, by the glowing pencil of Livy, more ſo, perhaps, than any other in ancient ſtory. I ſpeak from my own feelings. I read him, when a boy, in this important period of his work, and can ſcarcely now expreſs how much I then felt from the powers of his language and his animated deſcriptions.

His ſpeeches, alſo, on this occaſion, are maſter-pieces of eloquence; as there are indeed many others as much ſo in other parts of his hiſtory; witneſs that excellent one by Camillus at the end of the fifth book, in order to diſſuade the Romans from removing to Veii: Alſo thoſe that paſſed between Philip of Macedon and his two ſons Perſeus and Demetrius, are highly eloquent and characteriſtic. See Book 40th.

But thoſe by Hannibal and Scipio, before the battle of Ticinum, it is impoſſible to read without peculiar emotion;

and it muſt be allowed, that the whole of Hannibal's character, and gallant conduct, is painted in a progreſs extremely intereſting; even in a ſingle action or word, it is at all times conſpicuous, while the ſucceſſive defeats he gives the Romans, threaten, at every turn, the downfal of the greateſt empire on earth.

Indeed, next to the elevating impreſſions made on the mind from reading Virgil, Homer, or any other great epic poet, I believe there is no author whatever, that a perſon of true claſſical taſte can read, from which he will receive more lively and elevating impreſſions, than from the deſcriptions of Livy.

Our author, indeed, poſſeſſed ſuperior advantages to moſt other writers, in the very choice of his ſubject, which is more uniform, great, and magnificent than any other. To trace the riſe, progreſs, and growing grandeur of ſo renowned a people as that of Rome, together with their various wars, conqueſts, and important revolutions, was a taſk not fit for an ordinary author, but a noble one, in the hands of ſo uncommon a genius as Livy. And he accordingly executed it in the moſt handſome manner.

But while we admire his maſterly execution in thoſe parts of his hiſtory which have come down to us, how muſt every friend of learning lament the loſs of, by far, the greater part of his invaluable work. I, at this moment, particularly regret the great chaſm between the tenth and twenty-firſt Book; where we would have had, among other curious facts, moſt intereſting details of the war with Pyrrhus, together with a fine account of the firſt Punic war. And we are the more apt to feel the loſs, when we conſider the very eminent merit of the Books which immediately follow, and which have ſurvived the wreck of time.

Upon the whole, Livy and Herodotus have each peculiar merits; the former being more forcible in ſtyle, and perphaps more intereſting in ſubject; the latter always enter-

taining, often inſtructive and moral, and his language peculiarly ſweet and melodious.

In like manner Livy, beſides the niceſt choice of the moſt elegant and expreſſive words, which he ſeems to have at command, and to ſcatter with a liberal and unſparing hand, is poſſeſt of the moſt agreeable harmony, which diſtinguiſhes him as a Latin hiſtorian; and his ſentences are ſometimes long, ſometimes ſhort, being modulated with infinite variety to preſerve this harmony. In this reſpect he is ſuperior to Cicero himſelf, whoſe periods, though ſufficiently ſmooth and muſical, are more monotonous, and much leſs diverſified than thoſe of Livy.

In reſpect of judgment, reflection, and variety of information, Herodotus and Livy ſeem pretty much equal. I ſhall conclude by obſerving, that Herodotus ſeems to have been maſter of a vaſt variety, both of hiſtorical and philoſophical knowledge, which he took care to improve by travel and information from every quarter. His account of the Egyptian manners, laws, funerals, and of the inundation of the Nile, pyramids, and other buildings, is remarkably exact and accurate, and ſhows the great advantage of ſeeing with our own eyes the objects we are to deſcribe.

Even the little articles of natural hiſtory, that are here and there interſperſed in his works, are ſaid to be delineated with equal accuracy, and tend to ſhow, even in the ſmalleſt matters, the penetrating judgment and wide obſervation of this ancient and moſt reſpectable writer.

ESSAY VI.

Thucydides, Salluſt, and Tacitus compared.

THUCYDIDES immediately ſucceeded Herodotus in the hiſtorical department; living later ſcarcely by an age. He was of noble birth, the ſcholar of Anaxagoras the philoſopher, and ſtudied eloquence at an early period.

His manner is a perfect contraſt to that of Herodotus and Livy; for, in proportion as they are full and copious, he is cloſe and conciſe. Indeed he is the great model of all conciſe writers ſince his time.

Among the Greeks, Demoſthenes, Ariſtotle, and Theophraſtus, copied his manner moſt; among the Romans, Salluſt and Tacitus; who have likewiſe had many followers among modern writers, eſpecially the French.

The imagination of Thucydides, lively and juſt, catches objects exactly, and deſcribes them with great life and perſpicuity; but, wanting patience to dwell on them, it deſcribes them with rapidity, and gives us only the more ſtriking features, without filling up or completing the minuter parts, leaving the reſt to the imagination of the reader. Hence, to many perſons of a ſimilar taſte or temper, he appears more pleaſing, more ardent, and more ſtriking than writers of a different caſt. To copulatives and conjunctions he is an enemy; which, however they may ſmooth and round a period, ſo far retard the ſenſe and weaken the diction. For the ſame reaſon he rejects all unneceſſary epithets, and generally throws the force of a ſentence into the verb, in the ſtrong and emphatic manner of the Orientals.

Upon the whole, he abounds in ſtrong ſenſe and excellent reflections; though, in conſequence of his conciſeneſs, his ſentences are thick and crouded, and appear ſomewhat

broken, and his arrangement harſh, yet he is withal forcible and perſpicuous: his deſcriptions, though deſtitute of ſplendour, metaphor, or high colouring, are nevertheleſs pictureſque and animated in a great degree; and his ſpeeches are full of nature, good ſenſe, and a cloſe and conciſe eloquence.

There are ſome objections to the plan of his hiſtory, as not being pleaſing or uniform enough, but there are none to its veracity; for, beſides being an actor or eye-witneſs of many of the ſcenes he deſcribes, he ſpared no expence or trouble to get the beſt information. Compared to Herodotus and Livy, as to his ſubject, he has much leſs variety, magnificence, or entertainment; but more veracity and impartiality. For veracity of narration, depth of reflection, and fullneſs of information, he bears a great reſemblance to Polybius.

His Hiſtory, in eight Books, includes the ſpace of twenty-one years, comprehending the whole period of the Peloponneſian war, excepting ſix years. Xenophon's Hellenica are a ſupplement to this hiſtory, and the remainder of the war.

The emperor Charles V. is ſaid to have been ſo fond of Thucydides, that he always carried him into his camp, and uſed to talk of him with wonderful pleaſure. We have a good tranſlation of him by Hobbes. He was born 469 years before Chriſt, and died in his 68th year.

We come now to Salluſt, who ſeems to hit the happy medium between the auſterity of Thucydides, and the extreme conciſeneſs of Tacitus. Profeſſedly, however, following the model of Thucydides, his manner is hard, and his colours are laid on with a cautious and ſparing hand. In drawing characters he is particularly excellent; he is often moral and philoſophical, and indulges on all occaſions in juſt and pertinent reflections on the facts he relates; very different from Cæſar his cotemporary, who is full and particular as to facts, but extremely ſparing in reflections.

His conſpiracy of Cataline, and Jugurthine war, the only remains of his Roman hiſtory, are pieces of hiſtorical paint-

ing that will be admired through ages. The ſpeeches in both are extremely characteriſtic both of the author's beautifully conciſe manner, and of the diſpoſitions and manner of thinking of the perſons they exhibit. Witneſs Cæſar's and Cato's ſpeeches in the former; and thoſe of Adherbal and C. Marius in the latter, which will be laſting monuments of our author's genius and eloquence.

Neither is he leſs excellent in the deſcription of a battle, a march, or a ſiege. In all theſe he is lively, pointed, and pictureſque. The taking of Cirta by Marius, and the diſcovery of the platform of that caſtle by the Ligurian, are drawn in ſtrong and lively colours.

In drawing characters how finely does he contraſt the oppoſite ones of Cæſar and Cato, and with his delicate and deſcriptive pencil, how vividly does he draw the diſtinct and different ſhades in thoſe of Jugurtha and Bocchus; of Metellus, Marius, and Sylla: In a word, I know no author, ancient or modern, than can ſurpaſs him in this talent, and few, very few, that can equal him, if we except Livy and Tacitus:—Of this laſt I now come to ſpeak,

We may deſcribe Tacitus in general as acute and profound in judgment; of an imagination lively and comprehenſive; quick, rapid and ſublime in his conceptions; and on all occaſions animated with a love of virtue, liberty, and the rights of mankind. He inveighs againſt tyrants; but he inveighs, like a philoſopher and a genius of uncommon rank.

Eloquent, deſcriptive, and philoſophical, he is more acute and profound, but at the ſame time more obſcure than any other hiſtorian. As his ſtyle is more conciſe, it is alſo more nervous; but hence often ariſes its obſcurity, yet it is wonderfully pure and elegant for the age in which it was written; and we may ſay, there is hardly a word in it but might have been uſed even by the moſt correct writer of the Auguſtan period.

He is, however, conciſe in the extreme, even more ſo than Thucydides or any other author; but when you have

got over this difficulty, the greater pleaſure is enjoyed, as his ſenſe is always ſtrong, and his thoughts deep and refined.

His greateſt fault is, that he indulges in ſcepticiſm, aſcribing to chance, or the indifference of the gods to human affairs, the various and complicated calamities of the times in which he lived.

From this ſceptical principle proceed his extreme refinement and ſeverity in drawing characters; ſince he often imputes to malignance and deſign, thoſe actions that are as often the effects of accidental cauſes.

His delineation, however, of the character of Tiberius, as well as of Otho, Vitellius, and Domitian, and ſeveral others, muſt be allowed to be maſterly, and in general juſt; and although we may condemn in ſome meaſure his ſceptical and ſcarcaſtic manner, we muſt grant, at the ſame time, that it pleads its excuſe in the wickedneſs of the times, and that duplicity of heart which prevailed in too many of the public characters.

His deſcription of the prodigies that preceded the taking of Jeruſalem by Titus, is a good deal characteriſtic of his lively, though ſceptical manner. "Viſæ per cœlum concurrere acies, rutilantia arma, et ſubito nubium igne collucere templum. Expaſſæ repente delubri fores, et audita major humana vox, Excedere deos; ſimul ingens motus excedentium. Quæ pauci in metum trahebant; pluribus perſuaſio inerat, antiquis ſacerdotum libris contineri eo ipſo tempore fore ut valeſceret oriens, profectique Judeâ rerum potirentur;" but, ſays Tacitus, (following Joſephus and miſapplying the prophecy); "quæ ambages Veſpaſianum ac Titum prædixerant."

And here we may obſerve, that his account of the Jews, and their religion, from whatever ſources his information was drawn, is upon the whole erroneous, fabulous, and highly ſevere and ſarcaſtic. Joſephus, indeed, though a Jew, was deeply tinctured with infidelity; and we are not

to wonder that a Roman and an heathen would be much more ſo.

Voltaire, of the moderns, reſembles him moſt in his ſcepticiſm and ſcarcaſtic manner; while Monteſquieu in his ſtyle and diction bears the neareſt reſemblance.

For further particulars, as to the character of this great author, I refer to an ingenious and very elegant Diſſertation by Dr. John Hill, lately publiſhed in the Tranſactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

ESSAY VII.

Oſſian, Otway, and Shakeſpear compared.

AS I was the other day looking over ſome curious prints, I caſt my eye on one that repreſented Otway leaning on his elbow, in a muſing, melancholy poſture. What in this moſt intereſted me, was the mournful mixed with the ſweet in his countenance, ſtrongly expreſſive of his genius, character, and fortune.

I remembered that he died of want. His very plays breathe much domeſtic calamity. Yet I will not ſuppoſe, though theſe diſaſters might have given him a melancholic turn, that they made him unhappy. I ſee him ſmiling even in the midſt of his tears, and pleaſed with his very miſery. Melancholy, in ſome ſhape or another, has moſtly been the concomitant of genius.

But there are two kinds of melancholy; the ſublime and the ſweet. The former adheres to ſuch diſpoſitions as are formed for the awful and the grand. Enormous mountains, vaſt, ſandy deſerts, ſolitary heaths, dark, howling ſtorms, ruinous temples or towers, are to theſe objects of the greateſt pleaſure.

Oſſian, beyond any other, ſeems to have been a bard entirely moulded in ſuch a form. Nature, even in her gayeſt

forms, when delineated by this ſon of ſadneſs, ſeems covered with a mournful veil.

Shakeſpear, too, at particular times, excels in this reſpect, but it is only when his ſubject requires it. It is the terrible more than the melancholy that he draws. But why ſhould I compare him with Oſſian, when they excel in different ways? Beyond all doubt, Shakeſpear had a more comprehenſive genius than Oſſian, and Shakeſpear could have eaſily written like the Celtic bard; but the other in many reſpects, ('tis probable), could not have imitated the manner of Shakeſpear.

To return to Otway, his melancholy ſeem to have been founded more on the paſſions than the imagination. It has more of the ſoft and tender than of the ſublime; conſequently it is more ſweet, more pleaſing, more intereſting. It is the nature of the ſublime to expand and elevate the mind; it produces awe and admiration, but awakens not any of the ſofter paſſions.

On the other hand, the ſweet kind warms and melts the heart, intereſts the affections, and touches every tender ſtring of the ſoul. See, by the above author, the Orphan and Venice Preſerved, two plays inimitably wrought up with the pathetic; and in this reſpect hardly to be matched in our own or any other language. Perhaps with theſe, Southern's Oroonoko alone will bear a compariſon.

Compared to Otway, Shakeſpear's power of moving the paſſions ſeems to conſiſt more in the terrible than the pathetic. Throughout his beſt plays his predominate feature prevails. Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear, Othello, and Richard III. bear this characteriſtic above every other. In love-ſcenes, indeed, he is ſometimes tender or beautiful; but melting pathos is not his element. He raiſes and agitates the ſublime, but more rarely touches the ſofter paſſions.

Of the above character I ſhall give as an inſtance the firſt that occurs to me in opening Shakeſpear; for the inſtances are numberleſs in all his beſt plays. 'Tis Northumberland

expreſſing his vexation and deſperate reſolution on hearing of the fall of his gallant ſon Piercy. Henry IV. part 2.

" And as the wretch, whoſe fever-weaken'd joints,
Like ſtrengthleſs hinges †, buckle under life,
Impatient of his fit, breaks like a fire
Out of his keeper's arms; even ſo my limbs
Weaken'd with grief, being now enrag'd with grief,
Are thrice themſelves: hence, therefore, thou nice crutch;
A ſcaly gauntlet now, with joints of ſteel,
Muſt glove this hand:—and hence thou ſickly quoif;
Thou art a guard too wanton for the head,
Which princes, flush'd with conqueſt, aim to hit.
Now bind my brows with iron; and approach
The rugged'ſt hour that time and ſpite can bring,
To frown upon th' enrag'd Northumberland!
Let heaven kiſs earth! Now let not Nature's hand
Keep the wild flood confin'd! let order die!
And let this world no longer be a ſtage,
To feed contention in a lingering act;
But let one ſpirit of the firſt-born Cain
Reign in all boſoms; that, each heart being ſet
On bloody courſes, the rude ſcene may end,
And darkneſs be the burier of the dead."

The above paſſage, as uſual with Shakeſpear, has a daſh of the pathetic mixed with the terrible and ſublime.

ESSAY VIII.

A Parallel between Hiſtory and Novel writing.

CIVIL hiſtory, as exhibiting the tranſactions of nations, ſtrikes the mind with more force and ſolemnity than any other ſpecies of writing. It carries us back into paſt ages,

† Bend or yield.

deſcribes the characters of great perſonages, the revolutions of empire, the fall of ſtates, with all the various good or bad fortune attending the numerous tribes of mankind that have ſucceſſively figured on the ſtage of time ſince the beginning of the world.

Its objects, therefore, are various, important, ſolemn, and dignified; its utility in point of inſtruction, great; of entertainment, unequalled.

Novel-writing, however, as containing the hiſtory of man in a private capacity, with his various peculiarities, foibles, and good qualities, may, though leſs ſolemn in its objects, become, in able hands, peculiarly intereſting in detail, from thoſe domeſtic incidents and peculiar ſituations which are more or leſs the lot of all.

Accordingly this kind of writing has of late been carried to great perfection in our language, by Fielding, Richardſon, Brook, Smollet, and others. Brook is more natural than Smollet; his language is alſo more ſimple and he has ſeveral religious diſcuſſions, which with certain readers make him more intereſting.

As for thoſe romancers and inferior noveliſts, who have diſgraced the preſs with their dull inventions and frivolities, they are below all criticiſm: far leſs do they deſerve the attention of the ingenious or ſenſible, to waſte their time and thought over ſuch taſtleſs tales.

Rather, my gentle readers, go to a ſolid hiſtorian, who will give you good roaſt beef and plumb-pudding inſtead of kickſhaws and whipt-ſillabub; and plain truths inſtead of inſipid, monſtrous, or ill-contrived fables. Conſult the elegant Robertſon, the philoſophic Hume, even the laborious Henry, the ingenious, though fantaſtic, Gibbon; or, of more ancient date, the candid and impartial Clarendon, the voluminous Rapin, the circumſtantial Burnet.

Rollin, Mitford, Gillies, Hook, Ferguſon, and Goldſmith, in their ancient Græcian and Roman hiſtories, will all afford you curious information and rational entertainment.

The Ancient and Modern Univerſal Hiſtories deſerve particular regard from the immenſe variety of matter they contain. They merit the praiſe of attention and induſtry at leaſt; and exhibit the hiſtory of the world till the preſent time, delivered in tolerable language. The ſprings of action are ſometimes developed; and if they have not much philoſophy or ſentiment, they poſſeſs ſolid information and uſeful knowledge, and are at leaſt preferable to romance.

Even Voltaire, though often too ſarcaſtic and ſatirical in his hiſtories, and not ſeldom ſceptical in his dialogues and tales, is yet in general both amuſing and inſtructive; he poſſeſſes a truely liberal and philoſophic ſpirit; is always ingenious and ſprightly, and his ſtyle excels in a certain Attic grace, conciſeneſs and energy peculiar to itſelf.

Or, go to our travellers, biographers, and natural hiſtorians; ſuch as Hawkeſworth's or Douglas's Voyages; Pennant's Tours or Britiſh and Arctic Zoology; Goldſmith's Hiſtory of Animated Nature; Lord Bacon's Natural Hiſtory, with his Hiſtory of the Cauſes of Life and Death; Buffon's Natural Hiſtory tranſlated by Smellie; Nature Diſplayed; Bayle's or Moreris's Hiſtorical Dictionaries; the Edinburgh Encyclopædia, a new and valuable work; Grainger's Biographical Hiſtory; the Biographia Britannica; Memoirs by Sully or Cardinal de Retz. In a word, read any thing rather than romances, that are generally inſipid, ſometimes dangerous, and almoſt always trifling.

The many important diſcoveries in natural hiſtory and geography, particularly from the late voyages to the Southern ocean, open a vaſt field of entertainment adapted to all capacities. Even the invention and hiſtory of air-baloons have their uſe, as they demonſtrate the ingenuity of the age to which we belong; and may hereafter produce ſome very important and aſtoniſhing diſcoveries.

As for Novels, beſides theſe compoſed by the authors already mentioned, Mrs. Griffith's Novels; the Tale of

Other Times, and Cecilia, by Miſs Burney, are among the beſt I know.

Indeed, were women of genius and virtue always to attempt this kind of writing, it is to be preſumed, from their greater ſenſibility and ſenſe of character, that they would not only ſucceed better than the men in their deſcriptions, but conduct them with more delicacy.

Several other inſtances of theſe have occurred in our own country; and Madame de Genlis, (now Marchioneſs de Sillery in France,) is a living proof in what a ſentimental and delicate manner Novels ought to be written, ſo as to make them the handmaids of inſtruction; adorned at once with the charms of entertainment, inſpired by virtue, and covered with the delicate veil of modeſty.

ESSAY IX.

Of Pulpit, Bar, and Senate Orators.

IT is a general remark, that the Britiſh nation is more diſtinguiſhed for good reaſoners than great orators; and that particularly, our pulpit excels more in inſtruction and clearneſs of argument, than in perſuaſion or the powers of eloquence.

The French, Spaniſh, and Italian preachers are allowed to have a great deal more eloquence, and to give more ſcope to the pathetic. And though they ſometimes ſwell into bombaſt, or ſink to puerilities, they poſſeſs, in general, far more of that power of expreſſion and action, which has influence on the paſſions and the heart.

But though our moſt eminent pulpit-orators have been many of them deficient in the above-mentioned reſpects, yet they have poſſeſſed other powers highly eſtimable; and which, perhaps, have kept them from falling into thoſe

very extravagancies for which our neighbours are more remarkable: Such as incoherent and rhapſodical harangues, ridiculous geſtures and grimaces, unnatural flights; all of which have been juſtly ſtigmatized and ridiculed in a late humorous Spaniſh production, called Friar Gerund.

On the other hand, our Engliſh preachers have been always diſtinguiſhed for a certain ſedate and grave oratory, that ſeldom or never degenerates either into the flat or inſipid, or the bombaſt and turgid. It is is a calm ſtream of eloquence that is equable, clear, inſtructive, and enlightening.

Barrow, Clarke, and Tillotſon, all excel in that grave ſpecies of eloquence that convinces rather than warms; and pleaſes rather than elevates and tranſports.

Butler, Sharp, and the two Sherlocks, have peculiar merit on the ſame account; nor can they be ſurpaſſed for clearneſs and depth of argument, as well as preciſion of thought, and a neat ſimplicity of expreſſion.

Atterbury, alone of our earlieſt preachers, ſeems to poſſeſs moſt of that pathetic manner, for which Maſſilon, Bourdaloue, and other French preachers have gained ſo much applauſe.

Whichcote's Sermons publiſhed by Lord Shaftſbury are remarkable for a native vein of ſimplicity, candor, and goodneſs of heart, that in my opinion, has more value than the pathetic and laboured diſcourſes.

The bold, pathetic, or rapſodical manner has been followed to a faulty extreme of late, by ſome Nonconformiſts in England; but moſt of all by many of our old Scotch divines and high-flown Calviniſts, ſuch as Boſton, Rutherford, and others.

Ambroſe, Whitefield, Hervey, Weſtley, and their followers have all fallen, more or leſs, into the raphſodical way, and have done much to introduce that falſe ſtyle of preaching, which I hope will gradually loſe ground as ſound ſenſe, true taſte, and pure Chriſtianity more and more prevail.

Dr. Fordyce's Sermons are a little tinctured with the above extravagance; though, in other reſpects, elegant, lively, and inſtructive.

For the true ſtyle of pulpit-diſcourſes there are none that deſerve more to be recommended than thoſe of Dr. Blair and Dr. Campbell. They are both of them rational and pathetic preachers, may be reckoned as ſtandards of fine compoſition; and are, beſides, poſſeſſed of an evangelical ſpirit, peculiarly adapted to religious diſcourſes in general, and to pulpit-oratory in particular.

Sterne's ſermons are alſo good practical diſcourſes, compoſed in an eaſy, ſimple ſtyle, which is better than if they had been written with that affected, quaint, though ſparkling wit, that ſeems to pervade all his other compoſitions. His manner in theſe is ſometimes tender: but this very tenderneſs is frequently affected; and even his wit and humour, however imagined brilliant on ſome occaſions, is often dull, and almoſt always extravagant or unnatural. We believe his wit ſhone moſt in converſation in lively ſallies, appoſite ſtories, and quick repartees; but that it flagged when he ſat down to write a book, as he ſeems to have wanted patience to purſue any ſettled train of ingenious thinking.

I come now to ſpeak of our bar and ſenate orators. In Scotland, where the courts of law are better attended than any where elſe in the world, I reckon that bar-eloquence has been carried to a high pitch. Beſides, that the Scots are generally well educated, they are naturally acute, and have a particular turn for debate and argumentation; they have, therefore, produced a very great number of learned and able barriſters.

Lords Mansfield and Loughborough were formerly famous in this way, and raiſed themſelves to their exalted ſtation by their eminent abilities and aſſiduity at the bar. Need I mention the reſpectable names of Lockhart, Croſbie, Dundaſs, the two Erſkines, Campbell, and others; moſt of them living examples of this remark?

Sir William Blackſtone, the judicious and elegant author of the Commentaries on the Laws of England, has ſhown, in his Introduction to that valuable work, that muncipal law is not ſo barren a ſtudy as has been generally imagined; that it admits of conſiderable variety, is founded on the law of nature and nations, and the principles of common ſenſe; that it is a ſtudy productive of entertainment; requires extenſive hiſtorical knowledge, gives great ſcope for eloquence, and is fitted for elegant minds.

No wonder, therefore, that ſo many learned and ingenious men have cultivated this profeſſion, which requires abilities both natural and acquired above the ordinary rate; and is indeed one of the moſt important and uſeful to the ſtate of all profeſſions whatever. Beſides that, the bar is often a nurſery both for the bench and the ſenate; of which laſt I now ſpeak.

That the Britiſh Senate affords a vaſt field for eloquence is not to be doubted; as it is the ultimate tribunal by which all the moſt important concerns of a great nation are finally decided. It is the greateſt aſſembly juſt now on earth, if we except the National Aſſembly of France, where freedom of debate is allowed: it is the repreſentatives of a bold and free people, the greateſt and moſt flouriſhing in the world, met to eſtabliſh the laws, and diſcuſs, with the utmoſt freedom of ſpeech, the various and complicated intereſts of an empire ſtill great and extenſive. Accordingly many eminent orators have ſhone on this theatre of eloquence, more than any other the world can boaſt of. And though none of them may, perhaps, have reached the cultivated oratory of Demoſthenes or Cicero; yet a certain bold and free manner has diſtinguiſhed many; a clear and argumentative, others; and in general good ſenſe pervades the whole.

Paſſing over thoſe of more ancient date, we ſhall only touch on ſome of the moſt remarkable of our modern ſenate-orators.

John and Archibald, dukes of Argyle, were both eminent orators; and were remarkable for a ſtrong and bold elo-

quence, that has more force than the moſt argumentative and regular harangues.

Lord Cheſterfield, who was their cotemporary and rival, excelled in that kind of eloquence that is regular, elegant, and pathetic. Even his letters, to this day, evince the clearneſs, correctneſs, and elegance of his ſtyle. He alſo abounds in a certain Attic wit that is at once keen, polite, and pleaſing.

Lord Bolingbroke, as a politician was unſteady and irregular; but as a ſpeaker, he was ſtrong, animated, perſuaſive. Born with talents above moſt men, and bred among the polite and the learned, I ſuppoſe, he ſpoke much as he wrote. Such was the promptneſs of his powers! ſo lively his wit! ſo poliſhed his underſtanding! His Patriot King is an excellent performance: So are his Remarks on the Study of Hiſtory, and his Thoughts on Exile.

Happy for him, and for the world too, had he never attempted other ſubjects; his fame elſe, (excluſive of his irregular, political conduct), had gone down with ſhining and untainted luſtre to poſterity. With all his parts, he wanted principle and goodneſs of heart. He was a beautiful ſuperſtructure without a ſolid foundation.

Among our more modern ſenate-orators, Lord Chatham ſhines with unrivalled glory. His eloquence, like a torrent, carried all before it. Reſolute and ſpirited, like his political conduct, and daring, as his enterprizes, it had more of the vehemence of Demoſthenes, than of the ſtudied eloquence of Cicero. It was ardent, abrupt, deſultory, irregular; the effuſions of a great ſoul too much tranſported with noble deſigns to attend much to order or cool reflection.

Lord North, his ſucceſſor to the political helm, exceeded him in coolneſs and regularity; but his ſpeeches are often more witty than ſolid, more pleaſing than profound. His ſpeech, however, upon the diſſolution of Mr. Fox's miniſtry, is a maſter-piece of eloquence, and is the only one I can contraſt with Lord Chatham's againſt the independency of America. They both poſſeſs conciſeneſs and ſtrength in no com-

mon degree, and are remarkable for a bold deſultory manner, peculiarly ſuited to the occaſion.

The ſpeeches of Lord Shelburne, (now Marquis of Lanſdowne), and of Lord Stormont, (now Earl of Mansfield), are chiefly remarkable for argument and political knowledge, though now and then illumined with ſparks of eloquence. Mr. Burke's reform-ſpeech is an elaborate piece of compoſition, but poſſeſſes leſs of eloquence than his addreſs to the people of Briſtol, and many of his harangues in the Houſe of Commons. He is, however, too ſplendid and flowery, too metaphorical and extravagant to attain the character of a great orator; accordingly he is leſs liſtened to than formerly, but this may be owing, in part, to certain political revolutions. Mr. Sheridan is correct, eaſy and rhetorical. Mr. Fox is argumentative, comprehenſive, verſatile, and flows with an unbounded ſtream of unſtudied eloquence. Mr. Pitt poſſeſſes ſingular abilities, and is more pointed, ſteady, and perſuaſive. But as all theſe are ſtill in the field, it is difficult, before the end of their career, to draw their oratorical characters, or to delineate, with preciſion, thoſe younger adventurers in the Britiſh ſenate who are riſing into fame, and who promiſe, one day, to ſupport, with equal honour, the credit of this ſuperior ſchool of eloquence.

ESSAY X.

Of Humorous and Deſcriptive Poetry.

THERE is no talent more generally agreeable than a turn for mirth and chearfulneſs. As it is often the concomitant of ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, it, above all other qualities, diffuſes that gaiety in converſation which conſtitutes its greateſt reliſh, and naturally inſpires into the breaſt of others, that contentment and ſerenity with which its owner is poſſeſſed.

As we may not, however, always meet with perſons of this ſweetneſs of temper, whoſe ſprightly and joyous converſation is a relief to care, buſineſs, or ſolitude, the next beſt reſource is the reading of agreeable books; chiefly thoſe of the gayer kind; ſuch as humorous or deſcriptive poetry, odes, paſtorals, and even tales and ballads. Theſe are my ordinary amuſements at hours of relaxation.

How often have I read over, at ſuch hours of ſerene leiſure, the delightful poem on the Seaſons; Grongar-hill, by Dyer; the Fables and Songs of Dryden; and even the Ballads and rural Poems of Shenſtone! Even the Friar of Orders Gray, Hardyknute, Gill Morrice, Edwin and Angelina, and ſuch like, have often afforded me morſels of ſweet entertainment; as well as the tender Elegies of Hammond; and the Parody to the memory of Lucy, by Lyttleton.

Of a higher ſtrain, and as inſtruments of a more ſublime, though leſs tender pleaſure, I recommend Milton's Lycidas, his two charming odes, L'Allegro and Il Penſeroſo; the Caſtle of Indolence, by Thomſon; and the Minſtrel by Beattie; all poems charmingly deſcriptive and ſweetly moral.

Some of the Odes of Gray, Warton, and Akenſide, I elſewhere,* (in theſe Sketches), ſufficiently recommend. Of more regular ſtanza, but ſtill of the allegorical, deſcriptive, or paſtoral kind, are the Temple of Fame by Pope; the Hermit, Ode to Contentment, and Night-piece on Death, by Parnel; Gray's ſweetly doric Elegy on the Church-yard; and the highly finiſhed Perſian Eclogues by Collins.

Of this laſt, The Paſſions, Ode to Evening, and Verſes on the Death of Thomſon, are particularly deſerving of notice, and will bear many readings with pleaſure. Goldſmith's Deſerted Village and Traveller, are alſo correct and elegant poems, and written with great tenderneſs and beauty; to which I may add the beautiful and tender ſonnets of Charlotte Smith, with ſome deſcriptive pieces by Miſs Aiken.

* See Eſſay 12.

But in order ſtill farther to chear the gloom of human care, and relax the mind from ſeverer ſtudies, humorous and burleſque poetry is, in my opinion, one of the moſt innocent and agreeable entertainments.

Next to the comic Adventures of Don Quixote and Gil Blas, or the humorous pieces of Swift, and ſome of Fielding's, I would recommend the Diſpenſary of Garth, the Splendid Shilling of Philips, Pope's Dunciad, and Rape of the Lock, with the Macfleckno, and Abſalom and Achitophel, two excellent pieces of humour by Dryden.

All theſe are of the ſerious burleſque kind, and excite laughter, principally, by a certain diſproportion between the language and ſubject; for, as the ſubject of theſe poems is profeſſedly low, and at the ſame time the language is epic, grave, and lofty, no ſmall part of the humour ariſes from this ludicrous incongruity. As in the following excellent example, from the Splendid Shilling.

" My Galligaſkins, that have long withſtood
The winter's fury and encroaching froſts,
By time ſubdued, (what cannot time ſubdue!)
An horrid chaſm diſcloſe; an orifice
Wide, diſcontinuous, at which the winds
Eurus and Auſter, and the dreadful force
Of Boreas, that congeals the Cronian waves,
Tumultous enter with dire-chilling blaſts,
Portending agues."

On the other hand, the inimitable Butler, in his Hudibras, has excelled moſt in examples of the comic burleſque kind of poetry. And as both his language and ſubject are in the higheſt degree ludicrous, there is hence the utmoſt ſcope given to the exertion of wit and ridicule in all their branches.

Often the very ſound of the words and double rhyme correſpond with the levity of the ſubject.

EXAMPLES;

"When pulpit drum eccleſiaſtic,
Was beat with fiſt inſtead of a ſtick."

"There was an ancient ſage philoſopher,
That had read Alexander Roſs over."

Often, too, a great or ſolemn ſubject is degraded by the lowneſs of the imagery; as,

"The ſun had long ſince in the lap
Of Thetis taken out his nap;
And, like a lobſter boil'd, the morn
From black to red began to turn."

And indeed, the whole ridicule of the character of Hudibras, who is always great and important in his own eyes, principally ariſes from his putting a ſtreſs upon opinions and things of little or no value; or his entering, with ſerious ſolemnity, upon actions that are either abſurd, or of little importance; all which become ſtill more ridiculous by that ludicrous equipage, geſtures, and phraſeology with which he is always introduced by the author.

Butler, of all writers whatever, abounds moſt in burleſque wit, and happy alluſions; and as not only his wit, but his verſe is entirely his own, and extremely ſuitable to his ſubject, he has hence carried the comic burleſque kind of poetry to the higheſt pitch; he is perfectly original in his way, nor has he ever been ſucceſsfully imitated †.

Not only Butler, but Horace, Shakeſpear, Addiſon, Cervantes, Garth, Gay, &c. were all men equally renowned for the greateſt good nature, as well as the fineſt humour.

† May we not hence preſume that a mind that teemed with ſuch a profuſion of wit and ludicrous ideas, muſt have been a happy one; as nothing is a greater indication of a mind at eaſe than a continued ſucceſſion in it of the moſt ſmiling and diverting imagery? "If ſo, the author of Hudibras is more to be envied for his wit, than pitied for his poverty." G.

Indeed, the nature of their wit, which is of the innocent and gentle, and not of the ſevere kind, indicates the ſame gentleneſs of temper in the authors, and inſpires the reader with ſimilar feelings.

Even Swift's poetical pieces are generally of the good-natured kind of humour: Such as, his Baucis and Philemon, Deſcription of a City-ſhower, Elegy on the death of Partridge, and more particulary the Verſes on his own death, founded on a ſentence in Rochefoucault's Maxims.

Swift, however, in many inſtances where his prejudices are concerned, (and he had ſtrong prejudices,) is unboundly virulent and acrimonious; and in this he reſembles Ariſtophanes, Lucian, and Juvenal of the ancients, and Voltaire of the moderns, more than any other writer.

In theſe caſes, where wit is employed not to correct vice or expoſe folly, but to gratify prejudice, paſſion, or reſentment, it becomes abuſive and indelicate, and proves diſguſting rather than inſtructive or entertaining, and, as ſuch, comes not under my preſent ſubject; which was to recommend thoſe writers that improve the mind through the medium of pleaſure; and that either delight by enchanting deſcription, or amuſe by harmleſs merriment.

Let me add, in praiſe of Shakeſpear, and partly of Addiſon, that their humour of all others is the moſt innocent, and at the ſame time the moſt natural. It is the humour of character they deſcribe, or what is called pure humour. It is the tranſcript of life and manners, which reaches the heart directly, and with eaſe.

Addiſon's Comedy of the Drummer, is full of the humour of character; ſo is his Spectator and Guardian in ſeveral well-drawn portraits, which I have formerly mentioned.

" In the Tatler, too, where are many excellent pieces by Addiſon as well as Swift, we find ſeveral portraits of character, drawn with maſterly humour." G.

Shakeſpear is inimitable in a variety of character, all drawn with the ſame native original humour; from the various and inexhauſtible humour of Sir John Falſtaff, to

the Grave-diggers in Hamlet, the Carriers in Henry IV, or the tatling and goſſiping characters of Mrs. Quickly, and the Nurſe in Romeo and Juliet; all his deſcriptions of ſuch characters, and they are very numerous, will ſtand as portraits of nature and humour to the end of the world,

Fielding, in his Tom Jones and Joſeph Andrews, excels in natural character. Smollet, in his Roderic Random and Humphrey Clinker, is generally pleaſant and natural. In his Peregrine Pickle, and other pieces, there is too much of caricature and overſtraining of character, to claim the praiſe of true genuine humour. Like Swift, he is often too ſevere and indelicate.

Having lately had occaſion to ſee a ſmall but exquiſite work of humour, called the India Guide, or a Journal of a Voyage to the Eaſt Indies in 1780, ſaid to be written by George Dallas, Eſq;), I beg leave to mention it among thoſe pieces of good-natured wit already ſpecified. The run of the verſe, like that of the French heroic rhyme, is quick and lively, and well ſuited to the ſubject. The whole is an excellent imitation of Anſty's Bath Guide; being compoſed with equal humour, eaſe, and elegance. With this laſt let me recommend, of the ſame year's production, Cowper's Taſk, or the Sopha; a work replete with wit and humour, and the genuine ſtrokes of an elegant and glowing compoſition.

"Is not Peter Pindar juſt now among the firſt poets in England for humour? He indiſputably poſſeſſes a portion of the divine fire and genius which diſtinguiſh the true poet, like the prophets of old, who were all poets. Had it pleaſed heaven to beſtow alſo upon him the higher natural gifts of candour and virtue, he had been ſuperior to the great, and awful to us all." G.

ESSAY XI.

On the beſt Epiſtolary Writers.

THE general character of the epiſtolary ſtyle is eaſe and perſpicuity As letters expreſs, without reſerve, all the thoughts of the ſoul, they may be either amuſing, tender, or inſtructive. As they are moſtly founded on friendſhip, their ſtyle ought to be free from affectation, to reject pomp and ſtudied dignity of expreſſion, and to aſpire only at elegant ſimplicity.

The fineſt letters among the ancients, now extant, are thoſe of Cicero and Pliny, each written in a different ſtyle: the former being moſtly on buſineſs or affairs of ſtate; the latter partly on buſineſs and friendſhip, and partly on ſubjects of literature.

Cicero's epiſtolary ſtyle is more eaſy and natural, that of Pliny more poliſhed and elaborate.

Pliny was an accompliſhed gentleman and ſcholar, had a good heart, and, as he underſtood buſineſs as well as literature, his letters come recommended to us chiefly by their good ſenſe, liberal ſentiments, learning, and knowledge of the world. The letter to Tacitus, on the unhappy fate of his uncle, is a finiſhed piece in the epiſtolary way, and the deſcription of his own Villa at Laurentum is elegant and pictureſque.

There are many traits of humanity and natural goodneſs ſcattered through the whole of his letters which peculiarly recommend this elegant and entertaining writer.

Of the moderns the French have been at the moſt pains to cultivate epiſtolary writing, and have made it the vehicle of almoſt every mode of entertainment or inſtruction.

Voiture and Balzac, however, who have been ſo much celebrated as epiſtolary writers, have both run into faulty

extremes; the former being too affected and whimſically witty, the latter too pompous and oſtentatious.

The Provençal and Perſian Letters are already mentioned with the praiſe they deſerve. The Peruvian Letters, by Madam Grafigny, are delicate, tender, and often highly elegant. They are well tranſlated into the Italian language for the uſe of ſchools.

The Turkiſh Spy, and Chineſe Letters, are alſo good entertaining books, of much the ſame kind.

The numerous Letters of the Marchioneſs de Sevigny, on literary, hiſtorical, moral, and miſcellaneous ſubjects, are likewiſe commendable for a proper epiſtolary ſtyle, and are among the beſt in the French language.

Among the Italians, Bentivoglio and Algarotti, for elegance, eaſe, and preciſion, are the moſt remarkable. Pope Ganganelli's Letters are well known, and deſervedly eſteemed for that goodneſs and openneſs of heart which they ſhow in the writer, and the livelineſs and elegance of their ſtyle.

Baretti has likewiſe publiſhed a collection of letters, written, ſome of them in a humorous, others in a deſcriptive ſtyle; which ſhows the Italian genius to ſome advantage in this way. They are well calculated (like his Dictionary and Introduction to the Italian tongue), for the uſe of ſchools.

Among our own countrymen are many excellent letter-writters. That intereſting collection of Letters by Swift, Pope, Arbuthnott, Gay, and the other wits of Queen Anne's reign, is invaluable for their ſimplicity and eaſe, and for the confidential ſpirit which they breathe: And in many of them we ſee the heart of the different writers, more perhaps than in all their other writings.

Lady Mary Wortley Montague's Letters are peculiarly excellent, both for the characteriſtic eaſe and elegance with which they are compoſed, and for their uſeful information, and very natural and lively deſcription of Græcian and Turkiſh manners. We have had many Letters of Travels ſince her time, but few have come up to the juſt and lively

manner of that lady. Lady Craven has lately publiſhed her Travels in letters, perhaps in imitation of the above; but they are fantaſtic, and inelegant in compariſon.

Lord Cheſterfield's Letters are written with exact propriety, ſometimes with eleganee of ſtyle; and, beſides the merit of their ſtyle, they contain ſome very proper leſſons on polite manners, and the graces, with various characters of high life in his time. They are, however, very deficient in pure and genuine virtue; and they ſavour not much either of philauthropy or true honour in the writer.

They, moreover, ſhow him neither to have been a man of deep reading, nor even of the fineſt taſte. Cheſterfield was agreeable, but ſuperficial; a man of the world only, no farther a philoſopher than to admire Hume and Voltaire; indifferently verſed in hiſtory; no judge of genuine poetry, for he ſpeaks in the moſt ſlighting and deriſive manner of Homer and Milton: In a word, he was ſhallow, plauſible, verſatile, a ſceptic both from temper and ignorance, an admirer of French manners and French atheiſm; and he was at beſt but a faſhionable courtier, and a pleaſant man of quality.

If his Letters are read with ſuch exceptions, they may be allowed to contain ſome uſeful information, and many well deſcribed characters, with various maxims of prudence and politneſs.

Let me add, that Gray's Letters, publiſhed by Maſon, are both, in reſpect of ſtyle and matter, among the moſt elegant and entertaining in our language; and as containing the various thoughts and manner of life, of a moſt reſpectable poetic character, are peculiarly intereſting on that account. They ſhow that even a poet, in his moſt ſublime flights, can ſtoop to the maxims of common ſenſe.

ESSAY XII†.

Of Engliſh Lyric Poets.

BEFORE we enter upon the juſt merits of theſe poets, it may be proper to obſerve that Shenſtone and Gray, (ſurely not the leaſt deſerving of them!) have of late met with great injuſtice from ſome critics, who have taken upon them to ſay, that their poetical character has been impoſed upon the public without any juſt pretenſions; that they are poets of the middle rank, with more ſhow than ſubſtance, tinſel than gold; that their diction is finically ſplendid; their thoughts abſurd, puerile, or common; neither marked with invention, ſublimity, nor nature; and that at beſt their lines are ſometimes tolerable, or only pretty.

At the head of theſe grumblers ſtand, of reſpectable memory, Drs. Johnſon and Goldſmith. This laſt, was in other reſpects, ſo amiable a man, that it is matter of ſurpriſe to hear that he was inflamed with a moſt fiery jealouſy and envy of moſt, if not all the wits and poets of his time. And indeed, the prefaces to his own poems tend to ſhow, that this aſperſion on his character was too well founded.

As for Dr. Johnſon, I have obſerved his injuſtice not only in reſpect of theſe poets, but many others. See Remarks on his Lives of the Engliſh Poets.

As the credit of our Engliſh lyric poetry appears to me to ſtand or fall upon this argument, it will, I preſume, be looked upon as a matter of ſome importance to vindicate the character of the above poets, and eſtabliſh it on the proper foundation, in oppoſition to thoſe who are for humbling them with the duſt, or twining them to the bent of your

† The author was firſt led to write this and the following Eſſay, by a converſation he had with Dr. Beattie ſeveral years ago.

minor poets, ſuch as Blackmore, Quarles, or Pomfret; or even Hopkins and Sternhold. Such is the contemptuous inveteracy of certain critics.

So far am I of a different opinion, in regard to Shenſtone and Gray, that I imagine no two poets in the Engliſh language are poſſeſſed of higher lyrical genius, joined to claſſic elegance and purity of ſtyle; that they are even among the chief ornaments of the preſent age, and that the Engliſh language is much indebted to them for the great beauty of their compoſition, as well as the true ſpirit of their poetry.

Both of them approach to the manner of the ancients; Gray to that of Pindar and Horace; Shenſtone to that of Propertius and Tibullus.

Gray's jealouſy of Shenſtone was rather unworthy of him, as was Addiſon's of Pope; and for the ſame reaſon, for the merit of each was ſo conſpicuous, though in different ways, as to ſuperſede all rivalſhip.

Gray excels in lyric enthuſiaſm, Pindaric harmonies, moralities, and in natural and ſublime deſcription.

Shenſtone's elegiac tenderneſs and ſimplicity can never be too much admired. The rural ſcenes he deſcribes, intermixed with the ſocial and benevolent affections, and all the ſweet innocencies and pleaſures of a country-life, naturally touch the heart, and delight and inſpire it with the like virtues and affections. They ſhow him at once to have been an amiable and good man, as well as a tender and elegant poet.

If, therefore, his poems do not elevate ſo much as Gray's, they at leaſt touch the heart more tenderly in general.

They are addreſſed more particularly to the lover, the virtuoſo, the man of feeling and of taſte, and the patriot.

His walks and gardens at the Leaſows ſeem to have been a tranſcript of his mind and taſte for rural amuſements, as Dr. Young's garden was of his religious and ſolemn diſpoſition; where, in an alcove, he had this motto: *Inviſibilia non decipiunt*, alluding to the diſappointing nature of all ſublunary things.

On the other hand, Gray, with a temper more reſerved and ſevere than Shenſtone's, and a genius undoubtedly more elevated, was impelled to leave the garden and the grove, the flowery mead with the purling ſtream, to chuſe a loftier theme. And though, with the moſt penetrating eye, he obſerves the tract and follows the footſteps of the Greek and Roman artiſts, he ſeems, moreover, particularly ſtruck with the wild and prophetic ſpirit of the ancient minſtrels and bards.

Hence he is continually tranſporting us back to the ages of the Gothic mythology, heroiſm, and minſtrelſy; and he ſoars, with the moſt ſublime flights, in thoſe airy regions, that are ſo well ſuited to the ſerious, though wild turn of his genius. This is his character in the two Pindaric Odes, and in his Norwegian imitations.

Like Virgil and Horace, he is peculiarly happy in his expreſſion: his verſification, too, like theirs, is various, free and remarkably muſical; his language figurative and glowing, yet chaſte and delicate: In a word, to ſpeak in the painter's ſtyle, he poſſeſſes the ſublimity of Raphael joined to the grace of Corregio.

The chaſtity and purity of his ſtyle are, moreover, ſet off by a certain antique manner reſembling the Doric, and which is well ſuited to his temper and the pathos of his ſubjects. In this antique manner he is well imitated by his pupil Warton.

Both Joſeph and Thomas Warton have great powers of deſcription; but the latter approaches neareſt to the correct and judicious manner of Gray. His two maſter-pieces, as I think, are his Grave of King Arthur, and the Cruſades, written in ſhort lines, which ſeem his favourites. And what is ſingular in him, he has introduced, in theſe poems, the uſe of long and ſhort ſyllables, by turns, at the end of the lines; which, no doubt, agreeably varies his verſe, and prevents the cloying repetition of ſimilar ſounds.

Yet Shenſtone was of a different opinion on this head, for he lays it down as a rule in harmonious compoſition, that

the laſt ſyllable of a line ſhould invariably be full and long; and accordingly it prevails remarkably in his verſe, and gives it a diſtinguiſhing length and fullneſs of ſound, which it muſt be owned is more particularly requiſite in elegy than any other ſpecies of poetry.

William and John Langhorne, deſerve, likewiſe, our notice here, in the liſt of lyric poets; the latter particularly on account of his Ode to Hope, and his deſcription of the four Seaſons, where he pays all due compliments to Thomſon, and other Scotch bards, and among theſe Ogilvie, who was his acquaintance.

Both brothers excel in ſmoothneſs and elegance of verſe, and ſometimes in good deſcription; but as they have compoſed but little, and that too in ſhort pieces, they have not acquired any great reputation.

William is more diſtinguiſhed for his proſe, his Effuſions of Friendſhip and Fancy, his Letters of Theodoſius and Conſtantia, and St. Evremond, and Waller; which laſt I have read, and think them very characteriſtic of the lives and philoſophy of theſe two learned and ingenious modern diſciples of Epicurus.

The Origin of The Veil, a Poem, is likewiſe his; which is both elegant and entertaining, and expreſſive of ancient manners.

Nor muſt we omit mentioning Collins, eminent both for genius and correctneſs of ſtyle. A remarkable terſeneſs of language, with a peculiar wildneſs of fancy, ſweetneſs, and variety of numbers, joined to images and alluſions of the moſt lively and deſcriptive ſort, all diſtinguiſh him as a lyric poet of the firſt rank. He has, however, his faults:

In his Oriental Eclogues, he is exceedingly clear, pleaſing and characteriſtic. In his Odes, though in general poetical and ſtriking, he is now and then affectedly obſcure. Labouring for uncommon thought and uncommon expreſſion, he becomes too metaphyſical, too allegorical, and even ſometimes wholly unintelligible. At leaſt, this is his character in a few Odes, where affecting uncommon ſublimity, he over-

ſhoots the mark, and loſes himſelf in the wildeſt tracts of raving and extravagance.

Eccentric in his genius and temper, and more ſwayed by paſſion and fancy than by ſober judgment, this unhappy man plunged himſelf early in diſſipation and diſtreſs, which at laſt was followed by a deep melancholy, that terminated in his death. His two beſt Odes are that on the Paſſions, and the Ode to Evening.

As for Akenſide, his Odes alone mark him a diſtinguiſhed poet; their ſubject being ſometimes deſcriptive, ſometimes moral and patriotic, and breathing, on all occaſions, a ſpirit of liberty characteriſtic of the poet and the freeborn man.

He ſeems to have drunk deeply of Græcian literature, and to have formed both his religion and philoſophy upon the principles of Plato. His Ode on leaving Holland, and that on Lyric poetry, are among the beſt of his pieces in the lyric ſtyle.

As to his much celebrated poem on the Pleaſures of Imagination, it may be obſerved, that though it is admirably deſcriptive in many places, and beautifully illuſtrative of the philoſophy which it teaches in regard to the powers of taſte, and the reflect ſenſes in general; yet that, as a poem, its plan is ſomewhat incorrect and defective, and the meaning and main deſign often buried and loſt under a multiplicity of words, and a conſonance of agreeable ſounds, either of no ſignificancy at all, or only expreſſive of ideas often repeated before, though in different words.

Jerningham's Poems are ſomewhat of a caſt with thoſe mentioned above. His Nunnery and Netely-Abby are ſweetly deſcriptive pieces of the elegiac and lyric kind, that merit, in my opinion, ſome attention, among the other productions of this ſort in the preſent age; and I have the longer inſiſted upon this kind of writers, as no ſpecies of poetry is more worthy of notice, and, in no age whatever, was lyric poetry cultivated to more advantage.

Yet, whether from its figurative and metaphorical ſtyle; its variable harmonies; its ſudden and abrupt tranſitions; with the high flights of enthuſiaſm which it adopts; it is to be lamented that thoſe very qualities for which it is peculiarly diſtinguiſhed, and which are indeed its principal beauties, are bars in the way of its being generally reliſhed, and diſguſt the majority of readers.

Among the ancient Greeks, Celts, and other northern nations, this was very far from being the caſe. No poetry was more cultivated or admired than the lyric, and its effects were wonderful indeed upon thoſe nations; ſince it rouſed them to action in defence of their country and liberties, and inſpired them with an inthuſiaſm which nothing could reſiſt.

But how few among the moderns are actuated in this manner? The ſtrains of a Gray, an Akenſide, a Warton, or Maſon, are heard without emotion; they are either not underſtood, or but coldly received by a thoughtleſs and diſſipated, though otherwiſe, a poliſhed and elegant age. They are indeed reliſhed by one or two of a million! But what is that to the whole?

ESSAY XIII.

The leſſer Poetical pieces of Gray, Beattie, and Maſon.

AS I wiſh erneſtly to recommend to my countrymen the ſublime beauties of lyric poetry, I beg leave to offer a few more ſtrictures on this art, by attempting to deſcribe the leſſer performances of the three above-mentioned poets; at the ſame time interſperſing remarks upon compoſition, and endeavouring to rouze genius to excellence, by exhibiting to view the moſt perfect models.

Gray poſſeſſed a genius that was penſive, curious, and philoſophic, it was richly learned, and ſtored with ideas of

various ſorts. Over this comprehenſive and well-ſtored genius preſided the greateſt coolneſs of judgment, and the ſelecting powers of the fineſt taſte.

No poet has deſcribed nature with more juſtneſs, whether he attempts deſcription or ſentiment. The pictureſque of the one, and the pathos of the other, are ſo ſtriking, that they cannot fail to intereſt even a reader of an ordinary taſte; but the higher claſs of readers muſt feel a delight that is eaſier to conceive than deſcribe.

One great charm in Gray's compoſitions, and indeed in all of the lyric kind, is the numbers, which, comprehending both the chime of the couplet and the variety of blank verſe, cannot fail to pleaſe on that very account; but managed as they are by the maſterly head of Gray, whoſe fancy

> "Scatters from her pictur'd urn,
> Thoughts that breathe and words that burn,"

whoſe ear was of the fineſt kind, and whoſe taſte and judgment were the moſt exact to finiſh and beautify the whole, we are not to wonder that he has acquired ſo diſtinguiſhed a rank in that particular province of poetry in which he choſe to walk.

But I mean here to confine my obſervations more particularly to Gray's ſmaller Odes that are not ſo generally known, or but little attended to.

The following ſtanzas ſhow the particular turn of his genius for ſolemn and pictureſque imagery:

> "Ye brown, o'er-arching groves,
> That Contemplation loves,
> Where willowy Camus lingers with delight;
> Oft at bluſh of dawn,
> I've trode your level lawn,
> Oft woo'd the gleam of Cynthia, ſilver-bright,
> In cloiſters dim, far from the haunts of Folly,
> With Freedom by my ſide, and ſoft-ey'd Melancholy."

Ode on the Inſtallation of the Duke of Grafton.

" Wiſdom, in ſable garb array'd,
Immers'd in rap'trous thought profound,
And Melancholy, ſilent maid,
With leaden eye that loves the ground,
Still on thy ſolemn ſteps attend:
Warm Charity, the general friend,
With Juſtice to herſelf ſevere,
And Pity, dropping ſoft the ſadly-pleaſing tear."

Hymn to Adverſity.

His plaintive and ſentimental manner appears ſtrongly towards the concluſion of his Ode to the Spring:

" To Contemplation's ſober eye,
Such is the race of man;
And they that creep and they that fly,
Shall end where they began.
Alike the buſy and the gay,
But flutter thro' life's little day," &c.

His turn for natural and lively deſcription is ſeen more particularly in the ſtanza that follows:

I.

" Now the golden morn aloft
Waves her dew-beſpangled wing;
With vermeil-cheek and whiſper ſoft,
She woos the tardy ſpring:
Till April ſtarts, and calls around
The ſleeping fragrance from the ground;
And lightly o'er the living ſcene,
Scatters her freſheſt, tendereſt green.

II.

" New-born flocks, in ruſtic dance,
Nimble ply their feeble feet;
Forgetful of their wintry trance,
The birds his preſence greet:

But chief the ſky-lark warbles high,
Her trembling thrilling exſtacy,
And leſſening from the dazzled ſight,
Melts into air and liquid light."

The moral mixed with the allegorical is particularly pleaſing and pathetic in theſe lines of the ſame Ode.

" Humble Quiet builds her cell,
Near the ſource whence Pleaſure flows;
She eyes the clear, cryſtaline well,
And taſtes it as it goes:
While far below the madding croud
Ruſh headlong to the dangerous flood,
Where broad and turbulent it ſweeps,
And periſh in the boundleſs deeps."

Poſthumous Ode on the Spring.

It is obſervable from the above, as well as his other pieces, that Gray poſſeſſes the happy talent of judiciouſly mixing morality with deſcription, ſo that neither of them too much predominates to the prejudice of the other.

The following ſtanzas, in the ſame poem, are alſo admirable in the ſame ſtyle. They begin thus:

" Smiles on paſt misfortune's brow,
Soft Reflection's hand can trace;
And o'er the cheek of Sorrow throw
A melancholy grace, &c.

Still where roſy Pleaſure leads,
Mark a kindred Grief purſue;
Behind the ſteps that Miſery treads,
Approaching Comfort view!" &c.

In fine, this poſthumous Ode of Gray's is excellent in every point of view; it is in his beſt manner, and is ſo delightful, that one may read it many times over with freſh

pleaſure. Indeed, I am ſo much its admirer, that I wonder not that Julius Scaliger, ſpeaking of a certain Ode in Horace, ſaid that it flowed ſweeter than honey, and that he had rather been its author than king of Arragon.

Gray's two Pindaric Odes are of a ſublimer caſt both in ſtructure and ſubject; their language, ideas, and harmony are all highly lyrical, lofty, and outdo every thing of the kind in our language. Maſon's Choruſes, Collins's Ode on the Paſſions, Smollet's on Independence, and one or two of Warton's come the neareſt them. Akenſide falls far ſhort of them; and even Dryden's Ode to Muſic is much inferior in force and ſublimity.

Gray's Odes, indeed, are of that wild and enthuſiaſtic ſpirit which ſeems to conſtitute the very ſoul of this ſort of poetry.

As its ſpirit is of the higheſt kind, it aſſumes bold and animated expreſſion, glowing metaphors, and the moſt ardent deſcription. Every thing muſt live and breathe. It affects extreme conciſeneſs, joined to the moſt ſounding, full, and various harmony.

This was the manner of the Greek and Roman lyric poetry. This was the manner of the Jewiſh and Celtic, of the old Provençal and the modern Italian lyriſts. They all indulge in rapture, bordering on frenzy; in allegory, wrapt in obſcurity; and in ſudden and bold tranſitions, ſeaſoned with frequent moralities, and pointed ſentences. And, upon the whole, it may be obſerved, that not only the beſt poetical thoughts, but the very quinteſſence of theſe thoughts, is requiſite to form this ſhort, but moſt exquiſite, as far as it goes, of the muſe's productions.

Of our lyric poets, I go on to mention another of great fame as a philoſopher; but, perhaps, of ſtill higher merit as a poet. I mean Dr. Beattie, the celebrated author of the Minſtrel.

I ſpeak here, however, of his firſt poetic productions, which I fell in with when very young, and at that time one of his own pupils at college. Soon after I found that he

had converſed with Gray, and that his maſter had honour by him. The ſame gravity of genius, and the ſame plaintive manner prevail in both

I ſhall ſelect a few paſſages out of his earlier pieces, or rather revive thoſe agreeable impreſſions with which I was ſtruck, upon frequent peruſal, in my boyiſh years.

His two firſt Odes, the one to Peace, the other to Hope, are in a ſublime ſtrain, with many fine lines, and much good harmony, in the manner of Pindar.

The Invocation to Peace runs thus:

"Peace, heaven-deſcended maid, whoſe powerful voice
From ancient darkneſs call'd the morn,
Of jarring elements compos'd the noiſe,
When Chaos, from his old dominion torn,
With all his bellowing throng,
Far, far was hurl'd the void abyſs along;
And all the bright angelic choir,
Sriking thro' all their ranks th' eternal lyre,
Pour'd in loud ſymphony th' impetuous ſtrain;
And every fiery orb and planet ſung,
And wide thro' night's dark, deſolate domain,
Rebounding long and deep the lays triumphant rung."

Thereafter opens a picture of the grim face of war, with all its attendant horrors, havock and confuſion, and which are deſcribed in ſtrong deſultory numbers; among which I have often repeated the following with a pleaſing kind of terror.

"The bloody banner ſtreaming in the air,
Seen on yon ſky-mix'd mountain's brow,
The mingling multitudes, the madding car,
Pouring impetuous on the plains below,
War's dreadful lord proclaim:
Burſts out by frequent fits th' expanſive flame."

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

" Involv'd in fire-ſtreak'd gloom the car comes on,
The ruſhing ſteeds grim Terror guides,
His forehead writh'd to a relentleſs frown,
Aloft the angry power of battle rides.
How ſtartled Phrenzy ſtares,
Briſtling her ragged hairs!
See, with her griping vulture-claws
Imprinted deep, ſhe rends the widening wound!
Diſcord, her torch blue-ſteaming toſſes round.
The ſhrieks of agony, the clang of arms,
Re-echo to the fierce alarms;
Her trump terrific blows.
Diſparting from behind, the clouds diſcloſe
Of kingly geſture a gigantic form,
That, with his ſcourge ſublime, rules the careering ſtorm."

The painting in the above deſcription, is, perhaps, ſomewhat too bold and glaring. The Ode to Hope, which follows, is in a chaſter ſtyle; being equally pictureſque and deſcriptive; but more juſt in the colouring, and every ſtroke laid on with a delicate hand. It is both highly poetical, and ſtrictly natural.

The Ode to Retirement, Triumph of Melancholy, and Judgement of Paris, contain many ſweet lines, and are remarkable for an agreeable plaintive manner, which is ſtrongly expreſſive of that love of nature, ſolitude, and tender melancholy which is almoſt inſeparable from true poetic genius.

Let me conclude, by mentioning Maſon in company with Gray and Beattie, as I think his manner not diſſimilar to theirs.

His Elegies are, indeed, lax, and diffuſe, and have little or nothing of pathos. But his Caractacus and Elfrida, as dramatic pieces, formed upon the Greek model, have great merit, eſpecially in the choruſes.

His imitation of a chapter in Iſaiah is alſo very good; his Muſæus, or Lamentation on the death of Pope, although the

firſt, is among the beſt of his pieces; the Ode to the Water-Nymph, is extremely poetical and much in the manner of Horace. The Ode to Melancholy, though otherwiſe indifferent, has the four following good, deſcriptive lines:

"While thro' the weſt, where ſinks the crimſon day,
Meek Twilight ſlowly ſails and waves her banners grey.
Thin, ſhivering ghoſts, from yawning charnels throng,
And glance with ſilent ſweep the ſhaggy vaults along."

Many fine paſſages, (particularly in his Caractacus) occur; as, for inſtance, the following natural deſcription of Patience, with which I ſhall cloſe this article.

——"Patience,
Her meek hands folded on her modeſt breaſt,
In mute ſubmiſſion lifts th' adoring eye,
Even to the ſtorm that wrecks her."——

This beautiful image has been lately thrown on the canvas, and finely executed by the elegant pencil of Angelica Kauffman; good copies of which are to be ſeen in the print ſhops.

ESSAY XIV.

Of the Sublime and Pathetic of the Holy Scriptures; and of their ſuperiority to all human compoſitions.

As we have often before obſerved, that ſimplicity is a principal ingredient in good compoſition, ſo there is no where that this is more apparant than in the fine paſſages of Scripture.

Be it ſpoken with reverence, the Bible is the beſt book in the world, for other more valuable conſiderations; but it may be obſerved alſo, to its praiſe, that it poſſeſſes, in the

more eſſential parts of good compoſition, very high and particular beauties. And theſe have the more merit, that they ſeem not to proceed from ſtudy or deſign, as in other books, but from the nature of the ſubject, and ſpirit, which animates them.

The Hebrew genius, independent of inſpiration, being warm and ardent, naturally delights in that rapid, conciſe, and figurative diction, which is more or leſs peculiar to the ſoil and climate of Judea. And it is even ſurpriſing to ſee this ſtyle transfuſed with ſuch energy into our common tranſlation, which is in general accurate and expreſſive. A more elaborate, or elegant one, might indeed be given; but it is a queſtion whether it might not loſe in force and ſolemnity, what it would gain in ſtudied elegance.

Certain it is, the ſtory of Joſeph and his Brethren is told with ſuch admirable ſimplicity, in the old verſion, as renders it highly intereſting; and might it not loſe its intereſt, as well as ſimplicity, were it worked up with greater finery in a more pompous tranſlation?

The beautiful ſongs of Moſes, of Barak and Deborah, with David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan, although the laſt is a little unfaithfully rendered in a line or two, are, upon the whole, ſo charming, as they juſt now ſtand, that there is hardly any occaſion to wiſh for a new tranſlation, except it be to tranſlate a few parts more accurately, and raiſe the ſtyle of ſome others.

How beautiful, in our preſent verſion, are numberleſs paſſages in the book of Job, the Pſalms, Iſaiah, with ſome others of the Prophets, who, along with their divine prophetic ſpirit, ſeem alſo to poſſeſs great powers in the pathetic and ſublime!

The deſcent of the Deity in the prophet Habbakkuk is beyond all human deſcriptions of the kind, and can only be equalled by that amazingly ſublime one in the 18th Pſalm, which is ſo finely rendered in Buchannan's elegant Latin verſion, that it rivals, if we miſtake not, even Virgil himſelf in magnificence of expreſſion and harmony.

Indeed, in all places of Scripture, where the Deity is deſcribed, it is with a majeſty far above compariſon; and though Homer is wonderfully ſublime in the deſcription of his gods, and far ſurpaſſes all other poets in this particular, he is yet much excelled by the inſpired writers, whoſe ideas on this ſubject, as indeed we might expect, are not only more juſt and more rational, but far more ſublime than thoſe of Homer.

Another peculiar excellence in the Scriptures, and which much enhances their value, is the perfect purity of their moral, and the heavenly piety and devotion which they breathe throughout. 'Tis this, indeed, that to poor dependent mortal beings as we are, conſtitutes their peculiar pathos, and recommends them far above all other writings.

I inſtance the holy breathings, ejaculations, complaints, prayers, praiſes, ſoliloquies, and heaven-aſpiring meditations of the Royal Pſalmiſt David, whoſe genius this way was great and uncommon; ſupported as it was by the warmeſt piety, adoration and dependence on God; tranſported with the beauties of holineſs, and inſpired by a fine imagination, and a genuine and ſublime turn for ſacred poetry.

The ſame may be ſaid of Aſaph, Moſes, Iſaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others of the Prophets, who all abound in divine aſpirations, and a fervent piety that comes home to every feeling and well-diſpoſed ſoul, eſpecially thoſe that have met with misfortunes in life, and have thence contracted a ſerious and devout turn of thinking.

Theſe paſſages in Scripture, therefore, are peculiarly meritorious and excellent, as they deeply affect and meliorate the heart, tranſported with the moſt ardent and elevated emotions, raiſing it on the wings of devotion above this world and its periſhing enjoyments, to fix it on God, the ſource of all happineſs, the ſtandard of all perfection; feeding it with holy faith, hope, and love; ſoothing it in adverſity, and ſupporting it in death. This then forms the peculiar and moſt touching pathos of Scripture; as the lively

and ſtriking diſplays it gives of the Supreme Being, conſtitute the peculiar and diſtinguiſhed nature of its ſublimity.

Upon the whole, I hope it is not improper to ſay, that there is every ſpecies of fine compoſition in the Old Teſtament; there is the ſimple and conciſe narrative; the inſtructive fable or allegory; the beautiful ſimplicity of paſtoral, joined to the ſublimity of the ode; with a vaſt variety of moral maxims and hiſtorical examples, all delivered in a ſimple ſtyle, but in language often highly beautiful, expreſſive and forcible; and being natural to a people not in a high degree of literary refinement, it adopts a certain graceful negligence, which, in my opinion, heightens its beauty.

For what can be more inſtructive, in the way of hiſtory, than Moſes's account of the Creation, of the Fall of Man, the Deluge, the building of Babel, the conſequent diſperſion of mankind, the hiſtory of the primitive Patriarchs, their failings as well as their virtues related, with the utmoſt candour and impartiality; together with the ſimple, though pleaſing manners of the firſt ages; the calling of Abraham, Iſaac, &c. the conſtant references to a High Perſon in whom all the nations of the earth were to be bleſſed; the twelve Patriarchs, chiefs of the twelve tribes of Iſrael; their multiplying to a great nation in Egypt; their departure thence under the direction of God into the wilderneſs of Arabia, under Moſes their appointed Leader and Lawgiver; their various wanderings, their ſins and puniſhment, their final ſettlement, after many miraculous interpoſitions in their favour, and many chaſtiſements for their depravities, in the land of Canaan; the inſtructive hiſtory of their kings, whoſe virtues, vices, and apoſtacies, as well as thoſe of the people, were always rewarded or puniſhed by God juſt as they deſerved:—I ſay nothing can be more inſtructive or intereſting than this hiſtory; and, as connected with, and having a conſtant reference to the New Teſtament, it is therefore more important than any other hiſtory whatſoever.

In regard to the compoſition alone of the Old Teſtament, what can be more pathetic than thoſe paſſages, that, amidſt

a great variety of figurative and poetical expreſſion, foretel a Divine Perſon to appear, the Saviour of the world; more moral, ſublime, or deſcriptive than the whole book of Job; more beautifully paſtoral than the Song of Solomon; more elegiac than the Lamentations of Jeremiah; more argumentative, moral, or preceptive than the wiſdom of Solomon, in the books of Proverbs and Eccleſiaſtes? Even thoſe books called Apochrypha, although excluded from the canon of Scripture, are yet excellent in point of compoſition, moral and prudential maxims, and the fineſt good ſenſe.

I come now to ſpeak of the New Teſtament, which is written in the ſame conciſe ſtyle of ſimplicity with the old; but in ſomewhat a different form, being partly narrative, and partly epiſtolary.

The Goſpels muſt be allowed to be written with an admirable ſimplicity of diction, as well as a moſt perfect and ſublime morality; animated and exalted by the moſt ſtriking, the moſt extraordinary of all characters, the Saviour of mankind.

The holineſs, the purity, the meekneſs, the humility and ſelf-denial, together with the modeſt dignity and firmneſs, joined to the moſt tender philanthropy, at all times conſpicuous in this divine character, and ſet forth in the plain and unadorned narrative of the Evangeliſts, have no equal in any language, or in any human compoſition.

One is naturally led to think that ſomething more than human muſt have inſpired ſuch compoſitions, ſince the mere dignity of the character deſcribed, and force of the ſentiments, doctrines, and miracles, ſufficiently ſupport the Evangeliſts throughout their ſtory; which is told with the utmoſt eaſe, without any effort or embelliſhment of art, without any colluſion or deſign, and rather with ſome ſeeming jarrings and contradictions, by poor, illiterate fiſhermen, who are ſurpriſed at their maſter's obſcurity; are often chargeable with unbelief and hardneſs of heart, miſunderſtand his character and divine miſſion; and candidly confeſs their ignorance of his main deſign, miſtaking the

ſpiritual from the temporal kingdom; all which, to a candid mind, renders their teſtimony more ſtriking, and their evidence more valid; and receives additional ſtrength from the ſupernatural circumſtances which attended our Saviour's crucifixion and reſurrection, and from the extraordinary prophecies which, ſeveral hundred years before, had foretold many particulars both of his life and death, and to which He himſelf and his Apoſtles conſtantly refer.

Is there any thing in learning, morals, or human ſyſtems of religion, ſimilar to the Chriſtian? ſo awful, ſo god-like in its concomitants and proofs? ſo pure, ſo heavenly in its effects on the heart?—Can any other religion boaſt of miracles ſo well vouched? of characters or perſonages ſo much above humanity?—Or has any other ſyſtem, either ancient or modern, deduced in one continued chain, and in a religious view, the hiſtory of the world, from the beginning, together with God's moral government towards man, both in regard to this world, and that which is to come?

How lame, how imperfect, compared to revelation, have been the notions of mankind, with reſpect to the nature and attributes of the One Supreme? or if a few philoſophers have entertained juſter opinions, how low, how inadequate, how generally diſfigured with idolatry and the groſſeſt abſurdity, have been the ideas of the greateſt part of the world?

Upon the whole, however dark or incomprehenſible ſome things in it may appear to our weak and limited capacities, is there not ſomething, likewiſe, in the Chriſtian diſpenſation, extremely ſuitable to the beſt ideas we can have of the holineſs and majeſty, as well as the juſtice and infinite goodneſs of God?

To return to the ſtyle, is there not ſomething, for example, in St. John's Goſpel, as to ſimple majeſty and pathos, far above the moſt enlightened of the Socratic ſchool? Is the eloquence of Cicero and Demoſthenes to be compared to that of St. Paul?

Allowing even the diſparity in point of ſtyle as to laboured neatneſs and elegance, which muſt be allowed, have not the Scriptures often the advantage in native force and energy? the metaphors and expreſſions, at leaſt equally bold and ſpirited, and the ſubject and ſentiments more ſublime?

Beſides the ſublime of the Old Teſtament, and the beautiful ſimplicity of the Goſpels, together with the divinity of the principal Perſonage therein deſcribed, which cannot be enough admired, I beg leave to obſerve that the Acts of the Apoſtles, which are written in a ſtrain of the moſt affecting ſimplicity, together with the Epiſtles of St. Paul, which breathe a peculiarly nervous and emphatic eloquence; as alſo the more calm and diſpaſſionate, though perſuaſive and pathetic eloquence of St. Peter, with the mild manner of of St. James and St. John in their Epiſtles, which has its peculiar value as contraſted with the ardour of the others; that all theſe, I ſay, conſidered even as human compoſitions, figure conſiderably in our eſtimation, even in reſpect of a natural, bold, though unpoliſhed eloquence, a beautiful ſimplicity, ſtrength of argument, and the ſublime of deſcription, ſentiment, and paſſion.

Further, when we conſider theſe Scriptures as divinely-inſpired writings, as the holy oracles of God, revealing his will to mankind, and as containing a diſpenſation of the higheſt importance, both as to our preſent and future happineſs, how muſt they riſe in our eſteem and admiration above all human compoſitions whatever?

The precepts of the philoſophers, no doubt, have their value, and may ſtill be read as excellent moral rules; they accuſtom the mind to regular thinking, and naturally diſpoſe it to virtue; the heathen orators, hiſtorians, and poets have great merit, not only in regard to their innocent entertainment, the excellence of their language and eloquence, but even the moral and inſtructive tendency of their works; they may be read even on their own account, as ſhowing us how far reaſon or intellect, unaided by revelation, may go; they contain fine efforts of genius, elegant ſallies of wit,

excellent poetical or hiſtorical paintings, moral examples and maxims, and much uſeful and entertaining information.

They ſhow us what the world was in ancient times, and in the enlightened ages of the two moſt poliſhed nations on earth, the Greeks and Romans, enlightened in genius, poliſhed in laws, language, and arts, and conſequently advanced not a little in humanity and virtue; yet that virtue ſtill wanting a guide; ſtill defective both as to its purity and extent, both as to its foundation and object; ſtill groping in the dark for want of a higher and more divine ſanction, as we find Socrates regretting (in the 2d Alcibiades of Plato) and even partly prophecying that ſuch a light would ariſe; he foreſaw its neceſſity, and foretold its exiſtence.

All this not only ſhows the evident ſuperiority of Chriſtianity to all other moral or religious ſyſtems, but likewiſe the neceſſity there was for ſuch a revelation as might give a divine ſanction to virtue; founding it on the fear and love of God *, and the hopes of a future ſtate; as being moſt conſonant to God's moral government, and the happineſs of man.

To conclude: Is it not a ſtrong preſumptive proof of the excellence of the Scriptures, and of the revelations contained in them, as being more than human, that they have already pervaded, as it was foretold they would, ſo great a part of the known world; that they have been believed and embraced by the moſt learned and enlightened men in each nation; that they have been canvaſſed and examined by the moſt able and ingenious men of all denominations, and have ſtood the teſt of the ſevereſt ſcrutiny; even amidſt the diſcuſſions and attacks of the moſt ingenious infidels and ſceptics; yet that they ſtill prevail and riſe ſuperior to every attack, and gain ſtrength by oppoſition. And is it not hence preſumable, that their propheſied propagation will become univerſal; and that as arts and ſciences, and good government

* If ye love me, keep my commandments. John xiv. xv.

more and more prevail, and the communications between diſtant nations are more and more eſtabliſhed by the improvements of commerce, and the reciprocation of mutual acts of friendſhip and humanity; ſo likewiſe ſhall true and undefiled religion flouriſh more and more, and knowledge and righteouſneſs cover the earth, "as waters cover the ſea."

So far I have ſaid in regard to the Scriptures and the Chriſtian religion, as connected with a Hiſtory of Literature; and if they are found to go hand in hand in the improvement of nations, and beſides mutually contribute to the advancement of each other, the propriety of my inſiſting ſo long on the Sacred Writings, will, I hope, be admitted.

On the ſubject of Scripture-compoſition ſee Doctor Lowth's Prelections on the Hebrew Poetry, a book replete with erudition, ingenuity, and elegance; Blackwell's Sacred Claſſics on the genius and ſtyle of the New Teſtament; Dr. Campbell's excellent Preliminary Diſcourſes to his new Tranſlation of the Goſpels; and Dr. Macknights Harmony of the Goſpels, with his ingenious and learned Remarks in his Tranſlation of the Epiſtles.

On the ſubject of evidence, ſee Addiſon's Evidences of the Chriſtian Religion, with ſeveral excellent papers in the Spectator and Guardian; *Grotius de Veritate Religionis Chriſtianæ;* but above all *Les Penſees de Paſcal,* which although in the way of looſe and detached thoughts, convey to the mind the moſt perſuaſive arguments in favour of religion that can be imagined; and are written by one of the greateſt men that ever lived. His genius, like Newton's, was mathematical, and would admit nothing but upon proof; therefore his opinion has the more weight.

Butler's Analogy, likewiſe, is an excellent book on the ſame ſubject, compoſed with great depth and comprehenſion of thought, joined to equal ingenuity, force, and connection of argument; the ſtyle remarkably ſimple, rather dry, yet plain, perſpicuous, and even engaging; in a word, the force of the argument, which is in a great meaſure new, is alſo uncommonly ſtrong, both in favour of natural and re-

vealed religion; and, upon the whole, in reſpect of genius and invention, as well as judgment, candour, modeſty, and good ſenſe, this is one of the moſt original books in the world; and does honour to our lauguage and nation. But as a ſtable and unſhaken monument in favour of religion and virtue, it is ſtill more wonderful! Like the holy religion which it goes about to eſtabliſh, the argument is ſimple, modeſt, and unobtruſive, but on that account the more convincing.

ESSAY XV.

Of the different kinds of ſtyle, and of the beſt ſtyle; and of the different authors in each ſtyle.

OF ſtyles there is vaſt variety. Almoſt every author has a different one. As various as our countenances and features are, ſo various are our minds, and as much diverſified our modes of expreſſion.

As it has been obſerved by naturaliſts, in arguing for a Providence, that no two perſons uſe the ſame form of handwriting; ſo we may here obſerve that every author, or writer whatſoever, differs more or leſs in a certain kind of ſtyle from another.

Some uſe more words, ſome leſs; ſome are more elegant, ſome more careleſs; ſome write to touch the paſſions and the heart; others are dry, or merely inſtructive.

To excel in the good kinds of ſtyle, all the accompliſhments of a great genius are requiſite; to wit, extenſive learning, joined to a knowledge of languages, and of the beſt authors in each language; good ſenſe and ſound judgment, joined to a cultivated taſte; a lively ſenſibility, joined to an imagination fertile, and feelingly alive to each fine impulſe.

Upon the whole it may be obſerved, that the beſt authors excel in every kind of good ſtyle. They are ſometimes diffuſe, ſometimes conciſe, as their ſubject leads them. In Homer you have ſublimity, grace, and pathos, by turns: Often is he ſimple even to rudeneſs. And herein conſiſts the principal excellence of great authors. For the more of every kind of good ſtyle they poſſeſs, they have the more variety and beauty; and conſequently give the more entertainment.

Homer, Shakeſpear, Milton, Taſſo, and Arioſto, excel in this variety; and conſequently are the moſt admirable, pleaſing, and entertaining of all authors.

OF THE SUBLIME.

VASTNESS, extent, or grandeur of ſize in material objects, activity of body and greatneſs of ſoul in animated beings endued with reaſon, produce what is called the ſublime, as it affects the mind; and the ſublime of compoſition ariſes from the deſcription of thoſe objects with juſtneſs and majeſty, and ſuitable harmony.

The chief paſſions, or emotions, produced in the mind by the above objects, are admiration, awe, a certain elevation of ſoul accompanied with terror, pride, magnanimity, fortitude. Theſe, for diſtinction's ſake, I call the ſublime paſſions or emotions; and they are the impreſſions, or movements, produced in the mind by thoſe magnificent objects either in the phyſical or moral world, which are naturally calculated to excite ſublime, great, or awful emotions.

Sublime emotions naturally inſpire ſublime expreſſion. As the objects are ſimple, they ſtrike with force; the ſenſation they produce is inſtantaneous; it raiſes and elevates, and gives the idea of vaſtneſs. As the mind expands to them with eaſe, and the imagination is rouſed with one vaſt and great conception, which engroſſes, or abſorbs, its whole

powers, it generally expreſſes this conception with the ſame ſimplicity and eaſe, with which it was conceived.

Simplicity is an eſſential ingredient in the ſublime.

Your flowery writers are thoſe of little minds that cannot graſp or comprehend great objects ſufficiently to deſcribe them juſtly; they, therefore, give us their own wild thoughts, dreſt out in a flowery expreſſion, which, with many people, paſſes for ſublime.

In hiſtory, poetry, and eloquence we have writers of this kind, without number, at this very period. The celebrated treatiſe of Mr. Burke on the French revolution is diſfigured with a ſtudied pompouſneſs of language that may, for a little, impoſe on the imagination, but ſoon diſguſts the judgment of every reader of taſte or common ſenſe.

In hiſtory, Gibbons is a remarkable inſtance of the depravity of taſte. His florid, pompous, and redundant ſtyle, ſtrikes the many with admiration; "there is no hiſtorian," ſay they, "like Gibbons;" although, all the while, it is nothing more than the airs of a fop, who, wanting ſenſe and ſolidity within, wiſhes to be diſtinguiſhed by his ſplendid coat, gold-headed cane, and other ſuperficial and external ornaments. We deny not but he is ingenious, acute, and lively; but in his ſtyle he is ſo affected, and in principles ſo wild and ſceptical, if not atheiſtical, that we cannot but condemn them in a work, of this kind, which profeſſes, on all occaſions, to recommend purity of compoſition, as well as the intereſts of virtue.

As plain dreſs ſets off a man of ſenſe to moſt advantage, ſo a modeſt and unaffected ſtyle is the recommendation, the proof, and never-failing attendant of true genius.

Watſon's Hiſtory of Philip III. is excellent for hiſtorical ſimplicity. The ſtyle of the Continuation of the ſame hiſtory by Dr. Thomſon is more ornamented. This laſt author, is poſſeſt of conſiderable powers of genius and fancy, as may be ſeen in ſome of his late pieces, in the way of tales and novels.

Of our late hiſtories, Miſford's Hiſtory of Greece, and Dr. Gillies' on the ſame ſubject, have great merit for their ſtyle, and convey much information. Profeſſor Ferguſon's Hiſtory of the Riſe, Progreſs, and Termination of the Roman Republic is unexceptionable on every account.

Mr. Hume and Dr. Robertſon are before all others in the true elegance of hiſtorical compoſition; in this reſpect, perhaps, they are pretty much alike, although in their political, philoſophical, and religious creeds entirely different.

Mr. Gibbon's manner, as alſo frequently Dr. Johnſon's in his Rambler and Idler, is to diverſify one great ſentiment into a number of inferior branches; on each of which they enlarge with profuſion, and in lofty ſtudied language, till the attention is fatigued, and the memory diſtracted in following them. It is in vain to graſp at the numerous and perplexed ramifications of their ideas. If the mind attempt it, confuſion, or ſomething like intoxication, takes place. Two cauſes operate to produce this effect; to wit, the pompous obſcurity of the language, and the too great expanſion and profuſion of ideas on a particular ſubject.

I ſay not, that this faulty profuſion or redundance is always the caſe; but that it too often takes place even in their beſt performances, cannot be denied.

Indeed it may be ſaid, in excuſe, that Virgil and Pope, with all their correctneſs and purity, are obſerved to have redundancies of expreſſion in particular lines or ſentences: ſo likewiſe has Homer, Livy, Herodotus, and other eminent writers both in proſe and verſe. But as this is obſervable only in part, and with a viſible view to give dignity and perſpicuity to their ſtyle, as well as fulneſs to their harmony, it is neceſſary and even commendable in theſe writers, eſpecially in poetry; but in a proſe writer, ſuch profuſion or redundance of words, if carried far, can have no effect but to render the ſtyle obſcure, tedious, and languid.

The great difference between the ancients and moderns, in the above reſpect, is, that the former, to the moſt correct,

pure, and harmonious language, join, alſo, ſtrong ſenſe, morality, or ſublime, natural and pathetic deſcription, all delivered in the moſt affecting and ſimple manner; whereas the moderns very often give us idle ſounds inſtead of ſenſe, or bury what ſenſe or ſentiment they poſſeſs, under a heap of affected, pompous, or unmeaning expreſſion.

Nature is ſtrong in every thing. Hence the pleaſure we find in ſimplicity, which is nature's chief and diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic. Hence the nearer the works of art, or the operations of intellect, approach to nature, the more delight they convey, the ſtronger effect they produce. We recoil at the obſcure, operoſe productions of thought; as we do at the complicated intricacy of a machine, parts of which are too perplexed and involved for our comprehenſion. They may dazzle by their glare, or aſtoniſh by their obſcure ſublimity, but as they convey no determinate ideas of which the mind can take hold, they neither enlighten the underſtanding, nor reach the heart, nor produce any durable ſenſation or delight.

OF THE PATHETIC.

Objects of gloom or melancholy in the material world; of diſtreſs, anxiety, ſorrow, or ſuffering in the animated and moral, generally produce what is called the pathetic; and in compoſition this principally ariſes from an affecting diſplay of tender or melancholy paſſions or emotions. Perhaps Longinus would have given us a different definition of the pathetic, by including more paſſions than the above. But as I have all along in theſe Sketches ſpoke of pathos or the pathetic, in the ſenſe of the moving, the tender, or melancholy, I wiſh to adhere to this definition.

As the ſublime in compoſition excites the ſublime paſſions of the ſoul, ſo pathos excites the tender ones, ſuch as ſympathy, pity, love, ſorrow. As the property of the ſublime is to rouſe, elevate, and agitate the ſoul with ſtrong a forcible ſenſations, ſo that of pathos is to touch gently,

ſoften, melt, or depreſs it with an overwhelming ſympathy, grief, dejection, or deſpair. The former belongs more properly to epic, the latter to tragic poetry. Among the ancients, Homer excels in the former; Euripides in the latter: Among the moderns, Milton, Camoens and Taſſo bear away the palm for ſublimity; Racine and Otway for the pathetic. Shakepear is often pathetic; but he excels moſt in what we have already termed the terrible, and which belongs more properly to the ſublime.

As in ſublimity, ſo in the pathetic, ſimplicity is an indiſpenſable ingredient. The moſt pathetic ſtories of Scripture are the moſt ſimple: So in Homer, the Greek tragedians and our own Shakeſpear, the moſt pathetic and moving paſſages are expreſſed with the utmoſt ſimplicity.

Moral remarks introduced into poetry have ſometimes the effect of the pathetic; as in this paſſage of Virgil.

"Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus,
Singula dum capti circum veſtamur amore."

Or, in this of the excellent book of Job: "Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble."

Indeed the whole book of Job, as well as the Proverbs, the Eccleſiaſtes, and Song of Solomon, eſpecially the two laſt, abound in the moſt pathetic and touching remarks on human life, and a moſt moving delineation of human paſſions.

The Elegies of Hammond and Shenſtone are likewiſe eminent for the pathetic; and the run of the verſe remarkably correſponds with the tender emotions deſcribed.

OF THE GRACEFUL AND SWEET STYLE.

This may be called a middle ſtyle betwixt the ſublime and low ſtyle. It is not florid; but has a certain genteel dignity attended with eaſe and grace, that gives it more of real beauty than, perhaps, any other. All the beſt writers are poſſeſt, more or leſs of this ſtyle.

Of the ancients, Herodotus and Livy as hiſtorians, and Theocritus, Virgil, and Horace as poets, ſeem to me to bear away the palm for this kind of ſtyle. Among the moderns Pope and Addiſon, the one in poetry, the other in ſweet, Virgilian proſe, ſeem more particularly to excel in this charm of compoſition; and well did Johnſon ſay, "That thoſe who want to form themſelves upon this ſtyle, ſhould dedicate their nights and days to the pages of Addiſon."

Indeed, grace like ſimplicity, ought to enter into every kind of ſtyle, as it forms in a manner the eſſence and peculiar charm of all fine writing. No ſublime thought, no pathetic turn, can be excellent, if it is not expreſſed gracefully; that is, with eaſe joined to a certain degree of dignity. Wherein this eaſe and dignity conſiſt, it is perhaps difficult to ſay: but we are ſure in the firſt place, that the thoughts muſt be juſt, and juſtly expreſſed; the words well choſen, ſmooth, and harmonious; and the whole ſentence judiciouſly arranged.

Of the difference betwixt a careleſs and a nice choice of words, and betwixt a harſh and harmonious arrangement, one may judge by comparing Addiſon's papers in the Spectator with thoſe of Steele. What a difference! The latter, though otherwiſe no contemptible writer, yet, from the careleſſneſs and inelegance of his ſtyle, can bear no ſort of compariſon with Addiſon.

It is juſtly ſaid in praiſe of Buffon, one of the moſt elegant modern French writers, that he ſometimes ſpent a whole morning in framing a ſingle ſentence. Not that he compoſed with difficulty, but that he was a very ſevere judge of his own writings, and would let nothing paſs from his hands that had not that ſtamp of elegance, perſpicuity, and grace, for which his ſtyle is diſtinguiſhed.

Beſides perſpicuity, ſmoothneſs, and harmonious arrangement, there muſt be ſuperadded ſpirit and dignity, and ſome degree of pathos; and this can be obtained by elegance alone; to wit, by ſeaſonably interſperſing lively metaphors

and ſimilies, bold figures, and ſmart and glowing turns of expreſſion. This muſt be ſparingly done; but when done with delicacy and judgment, it gives ſtyle its higheſt intereſt. 'Tis this that produces dignity and ſpirit, as well beauty and grace, the offspring of ſimplicity; 'tis this that warms and touches the heart, and gives that peculiar charm to compoſition, which is ſo difficult to define, and is yet univerſally felt and acknowledged. In fine, 'tis genius, a rare and pretious gift of nature.

The faulty reverſe of the genteel or graceful ſtyle, is the coarſe, goſſiping, low, or vulgar ſtyle. This is much in the mode of converſation, even of the loweſt mob. Idle tittle tattle! chit chat! Sir Roger L'Eſtrange is a remarkable inſtance of this mob-cant. Not only his political writings, but his tranſlations of elegant authors, are all debaſed with this low balderdaſh ſtyle. I inſtance his moſt inelegant Verſions of Æſop's Fables, Quevedo's Viſions, and Joſephus's Hiſtory of the Jews.

OF THE SIMPLE STYLE, WITH SOME DEGREE OF ELEGANCE.

The inimitable Swift is a maſter in this ſtyle, and the beſt pattern we have. He has infinite eaſe and grace, not ſeldom a degree of dignity, but he is alſo remarkable for a plain and ſimple ſtyle which he ſometimes affects, to humour a particular ſubject or character. This ſtyle, though ſimple, and ſeemingly the ſtyle of illiterate converſation, is yet poſſeſt of ſpirit, and in good hands becomes the vehicle of the beſt good ſenſe, and richeſt humour.

Cæſar and Xenophon, of the ancients, are alſo maſters in this ſtyle; which flows in them like a clear, tranſparent ſtream, unruffled by the tide of paſſion, never elevated to ſublimity, but always grave, calm, and ſedate, unembelliſhed by metaphor, and undebaſed by any extraneous or ſuperfluous ornament.

The faulty reverſe of this is the florid or bombaſt ſtyle; which we take notice of in another place.

OF THE DIFFUSE AND CONCISE STYLE.

Either of theſe may be carried to an extreme. Both Cicero and Cæſar are ſometimes too diffuſe, eſpecially the former; and it is a predominant feature in him, which puts him in a rank ſo different from that of Demoſthenes, who is extremely conciſe, but withal clear; and is, in conſequence of his conciſeneſs, far more forcible than Cicero: but Demoſthenes had formed himſelf upon the nervous eloquence of Thucydides; whereas Cicero followed the principles of a more full, copious, and ornamented oratory; ſuch as ſuited the oſtentatious, though leſs ardent diſpoſition of his own genius.

Tacitus and Sallust are both moſt elegant patterns of the conciſe ſtyle; but they ſometimes carry it too far, and become obſcure. Of the two extremes, however, diffuſeneſs ſeems the leaſt tolerable, and the moſt diſagreeable.

Beſides, too great diffuſeneſs, inſtead of ſerving to illuminate a ſubject, rather overloads and darkens it; the imagination of the reader is overcloyed, and his judgment and memory diſtracted, while the ſenſe of the author lies buried under a confuſed maſs of words.

The reaſon why a conciſe ſtyle has more force and effect than a diffuſe one, is, that it gives you a few of the beſt things upon any ſubject, but not all that can be ſaid; or, to ſpeak in the painter's ſtyle, it gives you a few of the moſt ſtriking figures or features in a picture, and leaves the reſt to the imagination of the reader. This is one of Virgil's excellencies as a poet; and in this reſpect he is preferable to Homer, who is ſometimes, eſpecially in his Odyſſey, too full and redundant in his deſcriptions; yet even here he is natural and intereſting.

Some late French writers are remarkable for a laborious and diffuſive ſtyle, eſpecially in tales and novels. Their ſentences, indeed, are ſhort and much pointed, having the appearance of an affected conciſeneſs; but notwithſtanding this, they have never done upon any ſubject, they give us all the particulars of it, and leave nothing to the imagination of the reader. Hence their ſtyle, like their converſation, is by far too tedious and verboſe. By enlarging too much, they fatigue rather than pleaſe.

OF THE NERVOUS (AND SIMPLE) STYLE.

Of this kind of ſtyle the New and Old Teſtament is the beſt example we can give. The words in this ſtyle are few, but ſtrong and expreſſive; often figurative and metaphorical, but containing a great deal of ſenſe and meaning. Its character is ſtrength, rapidity, boldneſs, and ſometimes a conciſeneſs bordering on obſcurity.

Dodſley's Oeconomy of Human Life is an excellent imitation of this kind of ſtyle, abounding in juſt apothegms and prudential rules of moral conduct, much like the Proverbs of Solomon, or "the Wiſdom of the Son of Sirach;" conſequently it is an extremely proper book to put early into the hands of children and young perſons.

OF THE POMPOUS STYLE.

Among the ancients, Lucan and Q. Curtius, Longinus, Seneca, and Plinius Secundus, were all too much in the ſtrain of an affected elegance, which often degenerated into bombaſt. Of the moderns the moſt remarkable pompous writers are our two celebrated moraliſts and philoſophers, Shaftſbury and Johnſon. Balzac among the French is a remarkable inſtance of the ſame kind of ſtyle *.

* The author is ſenſible that in this laſt Eſſay, there are ſeveral things touched on that may have before occurred, though in different words.

Of lower rank, (and to inſtance among our religious writers,) Hervey's Meditations, though a book extremely popular, and written by an author of the moſt pious character, and of the meekeſt and moſt humble heart, is yet ſuch an inſtance of the ſtiff, laboured, and pompous ſtyle as can hardly be matched. It is even more elaborately pompous than Johnſon's, (which is juſtly condemned;) and has done more hurt among our young preachers than perhaps any book whatever, by ſetting them the example of an impoſing, flowery ſtyle that ought never to be imitated.

Mrs. Rowe's Letters, Moral and Entertaining, is a book of the ſame kind; although not ſo faulty in the expreſſion, which is more natural and eaſy; but the thoughts are, in general, too whimſical and romantic.

Dr. Young, as a poet, is ſtrongly tinctured with this flighty and artificial pompoſity; and it is to be regretted in him, becauſe he is otherwiſe poſſeſſed of a fine imagination, and great powers of pathos.

What ſeems ſufficient to condemn this ſtyle, and proſcribe it from ever being attempted, is, that, however agreeable it may appear, at firſt view, its effects are tranſient and momentary; it bears no repetition either on the ear or intellect; it ſtrikes, indeed, at firſt, but it becomes afterwards diſguſting.

Indeed there is here a ſummary or recapitulation of the whole book; yet with ſeveral things new. And as the deſign is evidently for the improvement of the reader's taſte, it is hoped, that by often inculcating and placing the ſame things in different points of view, the utility of the plan may be ſtill further promoted.

ESSAY XVI.

Of Oſſian's Poems.

RHETORICAL figures, when ſparingly uſed, are found to add no ſmall beauty to poetic deſcription; but if frequently repeated, they excite diſguſt. For it may be obſerved, that even in the beſt poem, if the fancy is kept too long on the ſtretch, by a continuation of imagery and deſcription, let that imagery or deſcription be ever ſo good, they muſt diſguſt at laſt, becauſe the human mind is relieved and delighted with variety; and, as it conſiſts of different faculties, each of theſe muſt be gratified in its turn. Of the juſtneſs of this obſervation the poems of Oſſian exhibit a remarkable inſtance. For though every perſon of taſte muſt allow, the detached deſcriptions of the Celtic bard to be, (many of them) full of beauty and ſublimity; yet, from the profuſion of deſcription, and the too frequent recurrence of much the ſame imagery, one is ſoon fatigued after reading a few pages; one eaſily ſees that the poet was in purſuit of metaphor and ſimilie on all occaſions, there being hardly a perſon or thing he mentions, but he wants to compare them to ſomething elſe that he fancies extremely like them.

The thiſtle's beard! the ſtone of moſs! a ſword compared to the ſun's beam! the gliding ghoſt! the hollow whiſpering gale! the black-murmuring ſtream, &c. are images that recur too often not to tire our patience, however, we may allow their juſtneſs or ſublimity: There are alſo not a few inſtances, which could be particularized, did our limits allow of it.

As the ſweeteſt and moſt luſcious things tire the ſooneſt; as it is the mild claret rather than the ſtronger port that gains upon the palate; and the ſofter green rather than the

ſplendid red or white, that refreſhes without dazzling the ſight: ſo the moſt luſcious deſcriptions, the moſt ſplendid imagery, loſe their effect, if not ſparingly introduced. They are the ornaments, but not the ground-work of eloquence: good ſenſe, morality, ſentiment, character, frequent ſtrokes of pathos, and even a little of dry reaſoning, or a ſimple relation of facts, ſhould all ſet off and mutually relieve one another.

Oſſian's addreſs to the ſun is truly ſublime, and much in the ſpirit of the beſt poetical paſſages in the Old Teſtament. I beg leave to tranſcribe it, along with another paſſage, as an exception, among many that could be given, from the above general objection againſt the works of Oſſian.

"O thou that rolleſt above, round as the ſhield of my fathers! whence are thy beams, O Sun! thy everlaſting light? Thou comeſt forth in thy awful beauty, and the ſtars hide themſelves in the ſky. The moon, cold and pale, ſinks in the weſtern wave. But thou, thou thyſelf moveſt alone: who can be a companion of thy courſe?

"The oaks of the mountains fall; the mountains themſelves decay with years; the ocean ſhrinks and grows again; the moon herſelf is loſt in heaven: but thou art for ever the ſame! rejoicing in the brightneſs of thy courſe!

"When the world is dark with tempeſts; when thunder rolls and lightning flies; thou lookeſt in thy beauty from the clouds, and laugheſt at the ſtorm. But to Oſſian thou lookeſt in vain; for he beholds thy beams no more; whether thy yellow hair flows on the eaſtern cloud, or thou trembleſt at the gates of the weſt.

"But thou art perhaps, like me, for a ſeaſon, and thy years will have an end. Thou ſhalt ſleep in thy clouds, careleſs of the voice of the morning. Exult then, O Sun, in the ſtrength of thy youth! Age is dark and unlovely when it ſhines through broken clouds, and the miſt is on the hills; the blaſt of the north is on the plain, and the traveller ſinks in the midſt of his journey."

The following lines from Oſſian, deſcribing a battle, have a conſiderable ſhare of force and ſublimity; thoſe circumſtances being alone ſelected that are moſt apt to ſtrike the mind with awe and aſtoniſhment.

"Like autumn's dark ſtorms pouring from two echoing hills, towards each other approach the heroes. As two dark ſtreams, from high rocks, meet and roar in the plain; loud, rough, and dark in battle, meet Lochlin and Innisfail †.

"As the noiſe of the troubled ocean, when roll the waves on high; as the laſt peal of thundering heaven; ſuch is the noiſe of battle. Though Cormack's hundred bards were there, feeble were the voice of an hundred bards to ſend the deaths to future times; for many were the deaths of heroes, and wide poured the blood of the valiant."

ESSAY XVII.

Of the reaſon why the more early Writers pleaſe.

THE veneration for antiquity holds with regard to all the fine arts. The remains of an ancient building or tower, a piece of ancient ſtatuary, or painting, or poetry, all recommend themſelves by the very merit of their antiquity.

The effects of modern art, of whatever kind, ſuppoſing them equal in merit in all reſpects to the ancient, will not be held in ſo much eſteem, merely becauſe they are not ancient.

This ſentiment of veneration for antiquity ſeems to be ſo natural to the human mind, that one contemplates, with more curioſity, the little wars waged by the Romans with

† This laſt idea or compariſon is not new to the claſſical reader. Homer has expreſſed it with at leaſt equal force and grandeur about the middle of the fourth book of the Illiad. Indeed, the ſimilarity in deſcription of this article in the two poets is ſo remarkable as to render, in ſome degree credible, what has been often ſaid, that Macpherſon, the tranſlator of Oſſian, has thrown in ſeveral things of his own into the original.

the Æqui and Volſci, than one would do thoſe of two rival empires in modern days.

No doubt a good deal is to be aſcribed to the genius of the hiſtorian† who, by the mere force and livelineſs of his ſtyle, can make little things appear great to his reader. But this is not all. If one reflects but a little, he will find that the very diſtance of time has an effect on the imagination which he cannot reſiſt.

Expreſſions or ſimilies in poetry, drawn from the ancients, pleaſe on the ſame account. And this is one reaſon why, in Milton, thoſe alluſions pleaſe ſo much that relate to the heathen gods and goddeſſes: notwithſtanding in other reſpects they might be deemed improper in a poem, written confeſſedly to favour and illuſtrate the Chriſtian diſpenſation.

Things diſtant in ſpace, are regarded with veneration, merely on the ſame account, I mean, their diſtance. A high mountain, or ridge of mountains, ſeen at a great diſtance, and over a great extent either of ſea or land, ſtrikes the mind with a ſtrong ſenſation of grandeur and ſublimity.

Nay, the hiſtories or accounts we get of diſtant nations, pleaſe us not only on account of their novelty, but partly becauſe of the remote diſtance of thoſe countries, which ſets the mind as it were a travelling over all that extent of ſea or land that is ſuppoſed to lye between them and us. Hence geography, as deſcribing the moſt diſtant and remote nations and countries, is one of the moſt entertaining of all ſtudies.

The veneration ariſing in the mind, from the contemplation of objects remote either in time or ſpace, ſeems plainly to be cauſed by its running along a great extent of objects, all connected together in one long chain or ſeries, which being preſented to it as one vaſt extended whole, cannot fail to ſtrike it with the greateſt awe and veneration, and the different objects of which it is compoſed, more or leſs in proportion to their diſtance.

† Livy.

I ſpeak here of the ſenſation of grandeur ariſing from diſtance alone. The various ſources of pleaſures, produced in the mind by ancient or modern hiſtory, (eſpecially the former!) as well as the objects of natural knowledge, riſing in a ſcale from the foſil, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. and extending to the celeſtial region, and the boundleſs ſyſtem of the univerſe, ſtill further ſhew the vaſt reach of the preſent ſubject; of which we give here only an imperfect ſketch.

I come now to the more intrinſic and particular cauſes, why the earlier writers, eſpecially in poetry, pleaſe more than the latter. And here, beſides the pre-eminence in antiquity, upon which we have already ſufficiently deſcanted, we may obſerve, in the firſt place, that they have pre-engaged the ground and the ſubjects of the fineſt writing, ſo that leſs room is left to their ſucceſſors for ſtarting new ſubjects; ſecondly, that they are remarkable for ſimplicity, which will always pleaſe. They have the ſimple manners of rude ages to deſcribe, which are ſo peculiarly fitted for poetry, either of the paſtoral or epic kind; and as they are converſant with nothing but nature, either in the moral or material world, they paint her with a peculiar livelineſs, freſhneſs, and juſtneſs of colouring. Nothing is wanting or overdone by them; as may be the caſe with ſucceeding writers, who have not ſeen her in her native garb.

Moreover, theſe ſame early writers (it is preſumable) are often diligent copyiſts, not only of living manners, but alſo of all the beſt writers that may have preceded them in former ages, or in different languages. They have borrowed their native graces, and imitated their ſimple manner.

In this way, even Homer and Heſiod, and other ancient writers now extant, with all their fine genius and native turn, may have been indebted to their predeceſſors for many ideas, which they have improved and purſued to a greater extent.

The reverſe of all this takes place in the ages that ſucceed this early period. Even the *Auguſtan age* of any language; although it may have more of a poliſhed elegance and harmony of diction, although it may be more correct in plan, or preciſe in expreſſion, will yet be inferior in the native graces mentioned above; it will want that ſweet rudeneſs which is ſo engaging in the more ancient authors; it may have more of art, but it will have leſs of nature; and what it has in pomp and elegance, it may loſe in force and true dignity.

But in the ages that immediately ſucceed this period, the genuine beauty of language gradually decays; good taſte s ſupplanted by affectation. Men aſpire both to think and write better than the ancients, and to acquit themſelves as authors, in a new and uncommon way, quite different from all that went before them. Hence, inſtead of following nature like their predeceſſors, either in thought or expreſſion, they invent or adopt falſe ſyſtems and opinions; falſe wit; far-fetched conceits; affected, whimſical or bombaſtic expreſſion. Of this there is no end; and in this circle they run with long and giddy rotation, till at laſt perhaps they tire of it, and return to nature again.

"But, perhaps, it is too late. They cannot well imitate the ancients unleſs God and nature would reſtore their vigour and genius. Many Engliſh and French dramatic authors of this age have attempted to follow nature unſucceſsfully for want of original genius. In them we ſee not, as in the old poets, the native force and true dignity of genius." G.

ESSAY XVIII.

A Character of Dr. Johnſon.

TO draw even a ſketch of this character is extremely difficult ;* ſo mixed and rude an original is ſcarcely to be found ; and from this ſtrange mixture in his character, it is extremely difficult to aſſign its leading feature.

As a critic aud drawer of characters, in which he ſo much delights, and has got ſo much fame, he affects caricatura, groteſque, and the terrible, tragic manner of Salvator Roſa. He is bold and imperious, and daſhes, with ſeverity and gloom, the greateſt part of his portraits. Sometimes one paſſion, ſometimes another predominates, and holds the pencil to the delineation. Prejudice, ill-nature, whim, vanity, envy, all take their turns.

One principle, however, ſeems to reign through the whole, and to prevail on all occaſions, to wit †, a certain air of arrogance and ſurly diſdain, as if the author was infinitely above thoſe of whom he writes.

He was a Diogenes in criticiſm, always querulous and grumbling; a Scaliger, whimſical and vain; a Zoilus, abuſing a Shakeſpear, a Milton, or a Gray; a finder of faults in his cotemporaries from envy; ſnarling and backbiting them without mercy, and pouring out againſt them

avoid

* It is difficult to [illegible] indignation, or to expreſs it without ſeverity. To the friends and admirers of Dr. Johnſon, the author can only offer, as his apology, the unjuſt and abuſive attack made by the Doctor upon moſt, if not all the beſt of our Engliſh poets, with a view, as it would appear, to humble all merit except his own, and ſtrike to the duſt the nobleſt monuments of human genius.

† This is particularly viſible in his Lives of the Engliſh poets.

inceſſant floods of gall, that ſhewed how much his heart was torn § with ever-gnawing envy, and the moſt fiery jealouſy.

He has been ſaid to be religious; but he was rather ſuperſtitious, and for which ſome of his friends were pleaſed to call him one of the beſt of men, as well as one of the greateſt geniuſes.

And, his religion, however regular he might have been in the obſervance of its forms, or however punctual in his devotions, did not certainly manifeſt itſelf either in his heart or life; and he was a ſtrong inſtance how much a man may deceive himſelf as well as others in this reſpect.

The leading features, however, ſeem to have been vanity, envy, and an auſtere kind of arrogance that led him to deſpiſe and abuſe, not only equal or inferior, but far ſuperior merit to his own.

Upon the whole, Dr. Johnſon's merit is only to be conſidered apart from his faults, if it is at all poſſible to ſeparate them. His merit, as a man of genius, was conſpicuous where it ſhone by itſelf, and untainted by the peculiarities and infirmities of his diſpoſition.

As author of the Rambler, and Idler, and the Prince of Abyſſinia, he muſt be always mentioned with praiſe, as here his genius appears to moſt advantage, and with feweſt of his faults. He was then a young writer, and ſhowed not much of that ſevere arrogance which afterwards marked, ſo ſtrongly, both his literary and philoſophical effuſions.

A certain ſublimity, as well as melancholy of imagination, marks even his earlieſt productions. He was more ſtruck with the terrible and tragic than the beautiful or gay. In nature he always deſcribed the moſt awful or ſolemn ſcenes; and in the moral world he took moſt delight in the recital of human miſery, the fall of greatneſs, the diſappoint-

§ See his account of Gray, Shenſtone, Lyttleton, Hammond, &c.; but the tender Hammond he has abuſed on account of his connection with Cheſterfield, whom the Doctor hated.

ments of ambition, or misfortunes from levity or extravagance in the lower ſpheres of life.

His ſtyle was even then ſtiff and majeſtic; but it was alſo ſtrong and nervous, and full of that pompous and ſplendid eloquence which, at firſt ſight, is ſo generally agreeable.

The chief merit of the Rambler ſeems to be its moral tendency, its juſt remarks on human life in general, and its excellent delineations of ſome particular characters. His views of life are exhibited in affecting attitudes, that both intereſt and inſtruct; and they are ſo natural, though ſet off by his peculiar manner, that they both reach the heart, and delight the imagination.

In this work he has been imitated by Dr. Hawkeſworth in the Adventurer, with a good deal of his manner, but little of his ſtiffneſs or pompoſity. Theſe two books, indeed deſerve to be read on every account, as they are entertaining, moral, and full of character. The Adventurer, though inferior in ſome reſpects to the other, is perhaps more lively, humorous, and more in the manner of Addiſon.

The ſimilarity betwixt them is accounted for by Hawkeſworth's being the conſtant companion, diſciple, and humble admirer of Dr. Johnſon.

His immoderate uſe of words of Latin derivation is affected; they are often far-fetched, and give an air of pedantry rather than of elegance to his ſtyle. Suavity, perſpicacity, efflorescence, fugacity, hilarity, are words peculiar to this writer, and wear too foreign an air to appear natural in our language. Coruſcations or ſcintillations of wit, ebullitions of decency, rotundity of periods, and ſuch like, are all favourite expreſſions with him, and are too often repeated to be in general pleaſing.

As an inſtance of this affected ſtyle, take the following out of many from the Rambler:

"It is common for thoſe who have never accuſtomed themſelves to the labour of enquiry, nor invigorated their confidence by any conqueſts over difficulty, to ſleep in the gloomy quieſcence of aſtoniſhment without any effort to

animate langour, or diſpel obſcurity." Is not this highly turgid and unnatural? It were endleſs to mention inſtances which abound every where in this author; but is it not proper to condemn ſuch a mode of writing as an innovation in the proſe part of our language, tending to corrupt and debaſe it from its original purity?

As compiler of the Dictionary that goes under his name, he merits the praiſe of diligence at leaſt. And, though it is not free of faults, particularly erroneous or uſeleſs definitions, and ſeveral omiſſions, it is at the ſame time an amazing work to be executed by one man, and that too at intervals, amidſt ſickneſs and other avocations. But he was a laborious genius that worked with vigour and haſte, and did much in a ſhort time. He had alſo a moſt tenacious memory, and wide obſervation, that particularly fitted him for a lexicographer. His life has been written, with great induſtry by Sir John Hawkins, Mr. Boſwell, and others; no late author has been ſpoken of with more eclat, but we cannot help thinking, that like ſome other modern writers, he has obtained a fame and reputation rather above his merits.

ESSAY XIX.

Thoughts on Religion.

IT has been obſerved by a certain writer, that firſt thoughts are frequently better than ſecond; and that third thoughts are often better than either. The reaſon ſeems to be, that firſt thoughts are generally moſt natural; ſecond thoughts partake more of art and refinement, perhaps to an extreme; whereas, third thoughts, comparing the two former together, compromiſe matters betwixt them, or which is as often the caſe, return to the firſt thoughts becauſe they are moſt natural.

This, I have elſewhere remarked, is the caſe, particularly in works of compoſition. The firſt writers are generally the moſt natural. The next race of writers have too much art and refinement; but the third often ſee the folly of this, and return to nature again. In poetry, oratory, and the various branches of philoſophy, whether of morals, metaphyſics, or natural hiſtory, theſe viciſſitudes and revolutions, in human thoughts and opinions, have invariably prevailed; but as nature is ſtrong in every thing, men have generally reverted to their firſt thoughts which are almoſt always the beſt.

Juſt ſo in religion, we at firſt adopt its principles partly from education, and partly becauſe we find them natural; they are conducted in a natural train ſuited to our ſituation and faculties; and upon reflection we are pleaſed with the evidences, becauſe they alſo are ſuited to the doctrines, and are related with ſuch ſimplicity as to bear all the marks of probability and truth.

We are, however, not ſatisfied with all this: we afterwards turn ſceptical from doubt and refinement; or from ficklneſs of mind, and a variety of tranſient paſſions, become dupes to incredulity. We are led away by the torrent of the age, the general depravity of manners, and the general want of religion, or, at leaſt, of its influence among all ranks of people: we, however, at laſt, ſee our error, adopt our firſt principles, and return to religion again. This is a proof that religion has ſomething congenial in it, which correſponds to the nature and original conſtitution of man.

The pleaſures of religion, contraſted with thoſe of vice or diſſipation, are that the former are durable, pure, elevating, invigorating our faculties, and congenial to the dignity of our nature, as raiſed above the brute creation; whereas the pleaſures of the latter are tranſient, low, and grovelling, and pervert and degrade the dignity of man below even brutal inſtinct.

The truely virtuous and religious man is generally happy in all ſituations of life: religion and conſcious innocence afford conſolation in every kind of diſtreſs; in poverty, diſappointment, calumny, ſickneſs, and death. The virtuous and pious Addiſon could cry on his death-bed, "behold in what peace a chriſtian can die." And every ſuch good man can promiſe to himſelf the ſame happy exit.

On the other hand, irreligious or vitious perſons, having no reſource in adverſity, are generally moroſe; ſoured under croſſes and diſappointments, diſcontented with themſelves and all the world; in death they can have no conſolation, but rather dark and gloomy preſages of future miſery.

Their conſolations through life, if they have any, muſt be at beſt of an unſatisfactory kind, mixed with remorſe and ſelf-condemnation, their conſcience continually gnawing them upon reflection of what is paſt; and as they can have no reliance on the countenance or favour of God in this world, ſo neither derive they any ſource of ſatisfaction, hope, or comfort from their dependence on his favour in another.

This is a ſtrong and powerful reaſon why we ſhould adopt religion, as the ſureſt and ſafeſt road to happineſs, both in this world and that which is to come. Although this is no new doctrine, we preſume it cannot be too often inculcated.

The celebrated Paſcal, (in his Thoughts on the ſubject) has juſtly obſerved, that religion is the ſafeſt courſe even under a ſtate of doubt; ſince, if it be true, by a virtuous courſe, we have every thing to gain and nothing to loſe, (for what are the pleaſures of a moment compared to thoſe of eternity!) whereas by a vitious courſe we forfeit our title to happineſs both here and hereafter.

Upon the whole, the pleaſing retroſpect of a religious and well-ſpent life, muſt afford the greateſt ſatisfaction to Chriſtians even in this world; along with the pleaſing hope of futurity, they are ſtill the gainers even in this life; they are

approved by themſelves and others; they enjoy health and rational pleaſure, the eſteem of mankind, and every other real advantage.

I have offered theſe few detached thoughts on religion (with modeſty) as being connected with our preſent ſubject. Morality indeed ought to be the main object of all human learning; and as human happineſs and the improvement of the heart, are chiefly dependent on religion and morals, ſo likewiſe are they mutually promoted and improved by literature; which has, for its great object, the improvement of the heart, the nobleſt improvement and entertainment of the mind, and the conſequent enlargement of human happineſs.

Thus conclude the Literary Eſſays, and with them the completion of a deſign which was to compoſe a book that might ſerve as an Aſſiſtant, to guide the judgment and form the taſte, in reading the beſt Authors.

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FINIS.

ERRATA.

p. 17. line 25. *For* electic *read* eclectic.

p. 263. line 11. *For*, a certain graceful negligence. *read*, a degree of negligence.